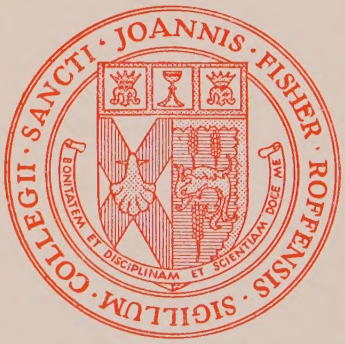
LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

By Giovanni Papini



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LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

BY

GIOVANNI PAPINI

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LETTER TO THE READER

DEAR READER:

I CAN talk to you in confidence because I do not know you. First of all, forgive me if I offer you for the fourth time a group of portraits instead of the great universal portrait which has not yet come to light.

Perhaps you were expecting *Adam,* or *The Record of Mankind,* which I have been promising since I was a young man. The truth is that I have been thinking out this book and working on it for fully twenty years. But with the passage of time and a correspondingly wider range of observation and deeper reflection, the work becomes continually longer and, for me, continually more difficult. It will be a book such as is rarely seen today, I mean as regards its dimensions: three hundred chapters in three large volumes. However I set about it, I can hardly concede less to the human species, and may Heaven guide me! Probably your kind interest will be chilled by the mere bulk of the thing, but in such a work, which I have felt and still feel to be a *duty,* I cannot allow omissions, or a hasty termination, for any reasons of convenience. I can keep within the limits of two thousand pages simply because I have been *terse,* but more than that I cannot grant. If even three men out of the whole

world read the book, I shall not hold these years to have been wasted.

Meanwhile I thought to collect the following essays into one volume; some are new, others were scattered here and there in periodicals or reviews of small circulation, and certain readers may be glad to have them corrected and put together. Remember that literary vanity can hardly be eradicated; even when it is confessed it is by no means destroyed.

If you happen to know my other books of essays: *Ventiquattro Cervelli, Stroncature,* and *Testimonianze,* you will notice a difference here which should not surprise you. There is more couching of the lance in those three volumes and more of the aureole in this. Not that the legend is really true which says that I used to rend and tear wholesale, but perhaps the wolf put out its claws now and then; not driven by hatred, mind you, but by an inherent, rooted intolerance for mediocrity and falsehood. Even today, if I saw the necessity, I should be ready to begin over again; Swift said that to blame the sin and respect the sinner is the same as blaming the cards and excusing the sharper.

You will find in this volume only essays of my own choosing. But if I am not mistaken, you will find them illuminating too, because it is said that affection is the best approach to understanding. (For when do we fail in affection ? Is the failure always due either

to our own dryness or to the unlovable qualities abounding in the other person? Is it always preferable to remain silent in such cases, with the excuse that we do not understand because we have no affection? Could we not say rather that if love helps us to penetrate beautiful natures, hatred enables us to understand ugly natures?)

In this volume you will see that choice has led me to speak of only three types of men: saints, men who sought sanctity, and artists. For I confess that in my view the only people one can really admire or tolerate in this world are saints and artists: those who imitate God, and those who imitate the works of God. Only they have any commerce with the Eternal, and for that reason they rise above the herd of wage-earners and pleasure-seekers. Saints try to guess the soul of the Eternal and to become like unto Him; artists strive to reproduce His vesture. The saint is the legitimate son of God (we are all sons by right, but few of us realize our filial duties, or live as sons of such a Father); the artist, to quote Dante's happy phrase, is God's nephew, therefore, in a more distant but still divine relationship, even worthy on occasion to touch the Body through the vesture and, through the Body, the Spirit of Him whom the artist always loves, even when he denies Him with his lips.

And so through this supernatural relationship binding the first of the blessed to the last of the poets, one

need not be surprised to meet in the following pages, under the same title, John the Evangelist, the eagle who nested when young on the breast of Christ, side by side with contemporary painters, or writers, whom many of us have seen, or see, walking Italian streets, dressed in modern garb. It is certain that the saints would not murmur like the laborers in the vineyard, against these poor "last ones": "These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats." They can be all called "Laborers in the Vineyard": those who plant it and those who gather the grapes, as well as the last comers, who collect the withered vine twigs, or glean the fallen clusters.

Standing above them all is the Master of the House, who hires the laborers, the Lord of the Vineyard, God who willed to become Man, the Prophet who willed to be a Poet. His place is among those who love Him, who seek His traces, who sing of His inexpressible beauty and try to outline His unimaginable image. Therefore no-one need be disturbed at the presence of the God-Man in the midst of men, and anyhow the essay to which I refer does not treat of Him, but rather of two pagan mortals, in whom it seems to me one can trace some signs of prefiguration and prophecy, which have hitherto escaped notice.

Dearest Reader, I recommend all these pages to you in the hope that you may find something pleasant and

useful in them, at least here and there. I assure you that they were not written through force of circumstance, nor on commission, but were nearly all born of an impulse of the heart or mind and set out with that sincere desire for a free apostolate, which now guides my work. My only desire is to devote to the service of truth what little artistic skill I hope to have acquired after nearly thirty years of labor.

Believe me, with sincere gratitude in advance,

Yours,

GIOVANNI PAPINI

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LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

PETRARCH

NEARLY all writers who have attempted to make a portrait of Petrarch have ended up by producing a drama with several characters in it. The more judicious have been content to divide him into two beings, but others have revealed in him a whole tribe of spirits in opposition and revolt: he is the tormented Christian, the sensual half-Pagan, the crazy Humanist, the restless and solitary romanticist, the avaricious and wordy courtier, the ambitious failure, the triumphant artist. To sum them up: he is a believer in Our Lady and in Venus, a disciple of St Augustine and a precursor of Rousseau, Cicero's pupil and Dante's rival.

It is certainly true that one who follows him through all the years of his life and reads all his Latin and vernacular works can construct any number of Petrarchs; or better still, one could construct a polypsychical Petrarch whose name, if the allusion were not too awful, would be Legion. But all the celebrated writers who have dissected the great Aretine's soul in this way have overlooked a fact which everyone knows (except literary professors): that even the simplest man is just as mutable in his own way, a diverse and multiple being, and

that this plurality of souls is all the more striking the greater the sensitiveness and the genius. But it does not happen that all men, even men of the pen, register and note down every movement of their will and every variation in their feelings, whereas Petrarch, for forty years at least, did nothing else but write, day and night, for himself and for others. Therefore we have concerning him abundant first-hand evidence, which lends itself admirably, when sifted and interpreted, to all the learned fantasies of dramatizing biographers. It is only the man ruled by a fixed idea, or who deliberately makes a sort of permanent mask for himself, who seems all of one piece to simple-minded contemporaries, or to posterity. In reality the world is full of complex souls like Petrarch, especially the world of literature.

It is asserted, for instance, that Petrarch was the first "modern man" and writers try to contrast him with Dante in that respect, as one would contrast a murmuring forest with a mountain of granite. These are beautiful metaphors in which there is always some grain of truth, but if we go closer we find that the Aretine's interior struggles were manifest too in the soul of the Florentine. If Petrarch wrote: *voluntates meæ fluctuant et desideria discordant et discordando me lacerant,* Dante also has confessed:

> . . . *pur di mia natura*
> *transmutabile son per tutte guise !*
> [Yet of my nature I am unstable in every respect !]

Alighieri too illustrates the contrast between the carnal man and the mystic, between the Thomist and the Joachimite, between the soldier of the Gospel and the prophet of Cæsar, between the partisan of Florence and the citizen of that Rome "whereof Christ is Roman." And if spiritual restlessness is a sign of modernity, then the first modern man in my opinion was St Augustine and not Francesco Petrarch.

Even more than love of beauty, it is really a sort of home-sickness which gives consistency to Petrarch's mind: a nostalgia for antiquity and a nostalgia for Paradise. There were times when he longed to have been born in the age of Cicero or Virgil and other moments when he aspired with all his overwrought heart to the eternal fatherland of the Blessed. But in every respect he lived in his desires outside his own age, present bodily but absent in the spirit, a perpetual exile, a voluntary proscript, a foreigner travelling through. That is why he sought the solitude of woods and mountains, where the visions evoked by his fantasy were not disturbed by the negations of an illiterate and money-making horde, and where he found it easy to transfer himself to the Greece of Plato, to the Rome of Scipio, or to the Africa of Æneas and St Augustine.

Like all sensitive and cultured people, the world allured him so long as it was remote and disgusted him the moment he descended to it. Like all the victims of genius, he sought for the impossible and succeeded

only in arresting some fragment of the possible. His tragedy is the tragedy of all poets: the torment of living with a nature half-celestial, half-earthly, in a prison that is wholly of the earth.

Petrarch's life is a disappointment to readers devoted to patriotic biography. There was none of the stuff of a Plutarchian hero in the son of Ser Petrarco. This pleasure-loving cleric, this effeminate fop who spent his time going from court to court, half-parasite, half-dilettante ambassador; this canon who was never a priest; this Platonic adulterer (according to himself) and laggard lover; this paramour who was a father but would never consent to be a husband; this client of the Colonnas, who suddenly kindled up on behalf of that plebeian republican Don Quixote, named Cola di Rienzi; this pillar of the Avignonese Curia who afterwards wrote the sonnets on Babylon and the *sine titulo* epistles against Popes and Cardinals; this aspirant to the crown of laurels who enjoyed regal and imperial friendships, yet praised and recommended an ascetic and solitary life: when all is said, he is not a model for youth, nor could you make a bust of him for a museum of perfect virtue.

First of all, we must see in him the man of letters pure and simple, the man who lives in the function of a writer, the nomad who goes about seeking what he cannot find, but who converts all the experiences of his

life and all the vicissitudes of passion into parchments covered with minute writing. You can well imagine Dante with the sword or the lance in his hand, but you can never see Petrarch without his pen or with aught else. If he could do without women, he simply could not live without the ink-pot beside him and his beloved manuscripts around him. Even when he went to the summit of Ventoso, he had to take a book with him and when he had admired the limitless expanse of sky and the glorious view of the valleys, he must needs open his manuscript and make notes; and the moment he got home he set down all his discoveries and emotions. In reality all his works, both verse and prose, are nothing but an immense autobiography or, better still, an intimate diary for the public, written in ten styles.

Like the majority of literary men, he too had a mania for political influence, but his epistles to Popes, Princes, Dogi, and City Governments hardly ever produced the effect he desired. The harmonious elegance of his Latin and his display of learned allusions were universally admired, but he was looked upon as an eloquent Utopian, ceremoniously impressive. He was applauded but no-one took him seriously. Moreover, he was ambitious to be a learned authority and a philosopher, but although his doctrinal and moral compilations show vast reading and are written in a Latin more ornate than mediæval Latin, still they

do not ensure him a place of first rank in the history of religious or philosophical thought. His letters — nearly all of which could be described as written *ad posteros* — are valuable for many reasons. Especially in the *Senili,* one must admire his homely wisdom, always tinged with humanistic pomposity and tending to oratory, but still often illuminated by the serene light of great human understanding.

Lastly, there remains — and he was very great indeed — the poet: not so much the composer of *Africa,* or the *Eclogues,* as the man who wrote those most sweet and immortal *Rime,* which he pretended to consider mere trifles, but which he must have loved in heart, at least as much as his heroic poem. Without the *Canzoniere,* Petrarch would not be remembered even with honorable mention, except among the precursors of Humanism.

It would be foolish to begin another panegyric of the *Rime* after six hundred years of praise and imitation. It would be almost impossible to say anything new about this garden of the lyric of love and sorrow — a garden that is always fresh and flowering, when so many experts in textual and æsthetic criticism have turned the searchlights of exegesis on its remotest little corners. Where Carducci and De Sanctis have reaped, not to mention the thousand others, there are very few ears to be gleaned.

But it is no harm to repeat once again to certain very modern readers, more familiar with a living pugilist named Petrarch than with our poet, that the other Petrarch, the man from Arezzo, shares with Dante and Leopardi the honor of being the most marvellous artificer of verses that our literature possesses.

The reader who looks over the *Canzoniere* inattentively, or takes it up merely as a task, may be bored by the apparent monochrome of themes and images. All those ardors and tremors, those lamentations and weepings may seem like over-emphasis and insistence on the part of an artist who never wearies of making endless variations of the same canon. But the reader who retains this impression has surely a very gross mind, with little knowledge of sentiment and practically none of art.

Petrarch composed a complete poem on human love — with interludes of divine love — in which all the moments, aspects, crises, and evanescent shades of feeling of this mysterious and most dominant of human passions are expressed, analysed and illuminated as no-one could do it either before or after him. Compared with the Troubadours and even with the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo,* Petrarch is like the efficient chemist after the alchemists, or the astronomer of the interior heavens after the astrologers. When he wrote in prose on moral subjects, he rarely succeeded in ris-

ing out of the commonplace and mere reminiscence. But in his *Rime,* he evolved a profound and original psychology of love, set out in verses by a poet who was, as was necessary, a supreme artist. What the crude reader thinks are repetitions, or litanies of complaints, are really profound expressions of the endless forms of exalted passion.

Petrarch had experienced the two most sorrowful forms of love, which are spiritually the most fruitful: unrequited desire and hopeless regret. While this was a misfortune for the man, it was good fortune for the poet. He sang of Laura, in life and not his; and of Laura dead, who could never be his, but who belonged more to him then in reality than when she was alive. If the moment of triumph and possession is gratifying to a man's senses and to his pride, it is a poor and sterile thing from the point of view of poetry. Petrarch never said anything about the woman who had lived with him for many years and who was the mother of his two children, and it is very doubtful whether any of his poetry refers to her. But the genuine poet is happily inspired only by a sense of *want:* longing for the woman he loves and cannot have, or for the woman he loved and who has been removed from his side for ever into the solemn shadow of death. He vents his tortures of imagination in lofty images, and expends his agonies of nostalgia in purifying tears and in the long hopelessness

of absence. Until love is either conquered by more ignoble passions or uprooted by more spiritual desires, Petrarch's book will always remain the *Enchiridion* of every gentle slave of Eros.

And even if humanity ever became so brutalized, or so angelic, that one day Petrarch's sonnets, *canzoni,* and *sestine* would be mere hieroglyphics without interest or meaning, still his poetry would live as a finely-modelled and vibrant joy so long as there was one person left in the world, capable of savoring the ineffable and incomparable beauty of the Italian language. One must leave Dante apart in his position, unique for ever, as a metaphysical poet of native and massive strength. But considered as a pure artist in the music of words, Petrarch very, very nearly surpasses him. His pearly, translucent limpidity is truly magic, like a miracle of winning grace, that is renewed in every line and in every verse. The divine secret of Petrarch's art lies in that sapphire brilliance of the right word inlaid into the right harmonies of rhythm, all the syllables and accents being colored more or less by the refraction of the main thought, according to its position in the theme. But thousands of plagiarists and mimics have not succeeded in profaning or vulgarizing that secret.

It would almost seem as though he had had a prophetic presentiment of what has been the result in our idiom of the selection of centuries. Ten out of

every hundred words in Dante are obsolete, but in Petrarch almost none. By some prophetic intuition, or by an exquisite foresight, he knew how to select exactly those words which time has chosen and which posterity has adopted, after sifting and testing the language. Every poet who attained an exact perception of what constitutes the essential genius of Italian lyric, even such a rebellious and rugged poet as Alfieri, or Carducci, has had to go back to learn from Petrarch.

His supreme gifts of expression and sweet pathos are not so gloriously blended perhaps in any of his poems as in the canzone to Our Lady, which closes and crowns the *Canzoniere.* Dante had idealized Beatrice as Divine Wisdom and she had led him even to the feet of the Virgin Mother; Petrarch did not presume so far with Laura, but when he had shed so many tears over a beautiful body now corrupting, he feels himself drawn in the end, with no mediator save remorse, to the glory of Mary; and he wept at her maternal knee all those last tears which no human love had been able to force from his aged, unsatisfied heart.

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

Our poor Buonarroti, like another half-dozen giants, is revered in an unfortunate kind of way: people think of him as if they were at the entrance to a Cumæan or Erythræan cave, waiting to see burst out of it, at any hour of the day or night, a fiery-visaged Colossus. They imagine he never opened his mouth except to utter words that should be sculptured in bronze, or so obscure that they need a whole cart-load of glossaries and a ship's cargo of commentaries.

Small people are prone to imagine, in their small minds, that the great man is always a great man and the genius always a genius, and that the tremendous sculptor of giants did nothing else but hew out giants. . . They think for example that when Michelangelo was a young man, he fixed on his face the mask of a superhuman artificer and that he never took it off, not even when he was going to bed.

I, on the contrary, am almost consoled to know that Dante frequented a tavern, that Shakespeare walked about drunk at night, that Machiavelli played dice with the carters, that Beethoven used to spend hours at a time in a public house, and that Michelangelo liked jolly suppers and practical jokes.

Superhumanity is all the more admirable in men

who seem to be (and are) ordinary men, but who suddenly go apart, shut themselves up in solitude and, transfigured as it were, write a Canto of the *Paradiso,* or paint a Prophet in the Sistine Chapel, or compose the Seventh Symphony. The miracle of genius consists in that very ability to soar, for certain hours, above humanity, while remaining extremely and even vulgarly human the rest of the time. Do not trust those men who adopt a grave and cogitating pose, as though they were for ever in a tacit colloquy with a Socratic Dæmon, or with one of the Muses, and who try to look like men of destiny and wells of profundity even when they are peeling an apple or talking about the weather. A genius is divine precisely because he is fed on the good human things of the earth; and he does not mind looking quite ordinary because he knows in his heart that, when the moment comes, he is indeed extraordinary. Such an one, by good fortune, was Michelangelo Buonarroti, sculptor and citizen of Florence.

Why in the world did he turn to making verse? I do not believe that the fashion of his day and the pressure of friends would have been enough to induce him to put down the chisel and take up the goose-quill. In addition to his poems which are a stream of reminiscence, and those others composed out of duty, there is a third group, including perhaps the majority of his poems,

which Michelangelo really wrote for himself, through one of those inner impulses which are the martyrdom and the jubilation of artists. When I read these latter, I have the impression that he tried to express in poetry what could not be expressed, or at any rate what he could not express, in statues, frescoes, and achitecture. In other words, Michelangelo's poetry is an addition to the total he tried to say, or, if you like, it is the alibi for his powerlessness.

Do not be shocked at that word. Every great artist is great because he realizes his insufficiency and knows his partial failure. The more he realizes he is nothing the greater he is, just as it is the saints who confess most frequently that they are sinners. Self-satisfaction and mediocrity always go hand in hand. The real genius is the conquered Titan, who knows he is conquered, but a Titan who first tore up the mountains to win; and we, little burrowing moles, think the ruins he has left are masterpieces. It is the poignancy of defeat which gives that sublime tone to the finished work, which the artist considers a failure and we perfection. The genius knows how powerless he is, and when he finishes his vain attempt, which to him is only an approximation but to us a prodigy, then he confesses his defeat. When St Thomas had written his *Summa,* he said to Reginald: *quæ scripsi mihi paleæ viderunt,* and I am sure that if Dante had lived a few years longer, he would have considered the *Com-*

media as so much "straw." Towards the end of his life, Michelangelo wrote these lines:

> *Che giova voler far tanti bambocci,*
> *se m'han condotto al fin come colui*
> *che passò'l mar, e poi affogò ne' mocci?* [1]
>
> [What avails my ambition to make so many baubles, since they have brought me to the one end, like a man who traversed the ocean and then got drowned in a ditch?]

He laughed when he said this, but his laugh reminds one of a death mask: and among the "baubles" were his *Moses* and his *Slaves.* Now, the powerlessness is all the greater when the artist has only one means of expression, when, that is, he is versed in only one branch of art. Just as a healthy man needs all his five senses in order to live fully, so an artist cannot content himself with only one eye or one hand: he requires all five queen arts. He would like to say in painting what sculpture cannot express, and when painting fails, he would like to turn to poetry and if even poetry wavers before the ineffable, there is, God willing, music. A complete genius tends to become a Briareus, polycephalous. Therefore we need not be surprised that Dante enjoyed playing and drawing, nor that Giotto, Brunelleschi, Raffaello, and Cellini wrote verse, nor that Victor Hugo used to draw; recall too that Salvator Rosa painted and wrote poetry, that

[1] *Translator's Note:* There is here a good pun, based on a popular expression, but it cannot be recaptured in English.

Ingres thought his violin more important than his pictures, that Nietzsche both wrote verse and composed music and that the musician, Wagner, wrote poems. We do not cite Leon Battista and Leonardo because they are the first names that come to everyone's lips. It is only human weakness that tends to the separation of the arts: but the more the seer is creative, the stronger is his desire to have several languages to express what one alone cannot say, nor even the whole of them put together.

Of all the artists we know, Buonarroti comes nearest to this highest ideal of the complete artist. He lacked only music: but he was the friend of musicians and some of the most famous composers of his day set certain of his madrigals to music. It must be admitted that Michelangelo was obsessed by that desire, which mental specialists grandiosely term "megalomania." When he thought of making a giant, he wanted to carve it out of nothing less than a mountain; when he had to build a dome, he aspired to make it the highest and vastest in the world; when he designed a tomb, he wanted a whole army of statues to keep watch around that hidden corpse. A man so constituted could not be content with one art only; he gave the merest outline of his dreams by having recourse to nearly all of them. He is like a dumb man helping to explain himself with gestures, or a cripple leaning on two sticks, or a half-blind man using a double pair of spectacles. Like

all creatures of earth, his power lay in the recognition of his own helplessness. The mediocre man, who thinks he is effective, does not succeed in expressing the thousandth part of what the man says who knows he is only stammering.

Poetry was the last of the arts which Michelangelo used to trace some syllable of that miraculous discourse, which he read confusedly on the endless page of the Universe. He entrusted to poetry what he believed blocks of marble and façades of stone could never depict: the sweet torment of love, the thought of the double death of soul and body, remorse for a wasted life. There is nothing about love, the love of creature for creature, in his statues, except perhaps in some of his earliest work. You can see the force of the warrior in *David,* of the prophet in *Moses;* the melancholy of the ruler in *Lorenzo,* of prisoners in *Slaves.* The allegories of the Medici Chapel are all unrest, greed, stupor; in the Sistine Chapel, he has shown the triumph of Creation and of Judgment.

Yet Michelangelo loved men and women with all his heart. Yes, men, too: not indeed in the way that the Aretine in his foul malignity foully imagined, but as a student of beauty loves a luminous model, a work of God, in the perfect shape of the human body.

Quel che nel tuo bel volto bramo e 'mparo,
è mal compresè dagli umani ingegni,
chi vuol saper, convien che prima mora.

[What I long for and learn from thy lovely face, is misunderstood by the earthly mind. He who would know it, needs must die first.]

said Michelangelo himself to Tommaso de' Cavalieri: and in another place:

E se'l vulgo malvagio, sciocco e rio
di quel che sente altrui segna e addita
non è l'intensa voglia men gradita,
l'amor, la fede e l'onesto desìo.

[What if the traitorous horde, stupid and malicious, mock and point their finger at our pursuits; the ardent will is none the less precious, with love, faith, and sincere aspiration.]

Therefore if Michelangelo's love is always tortured and sorrowful, it is due to the temper of his noble soul, which could not rest content with lesser good; and perhaps also to the "traitorous horde," who could not understand the "sincere aspirations" of the venerable old man. One need not be surprised to find cadences and themes from Petrarch and Dante in Michelangelo's poetry; he unquestionably took the idea and the rhythm for a contemptuous lyric from Dante's famous "stony" canzone, *Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro.* All those paradoxical antitheses of his about life in death and fire in ice, which sound like sixteenth century chippings of Petrarchism, are really his efforts to say the ineffable, to express the inexpressible, to put the living contradictions of life into words. They are a twisting

of concepts like his statues are sometimes a twisting of limbs, matter that writhes out of its bonds to become spirit.

One must remember also that he was not so well-versed or so sure in poetry as he was in the other arts. Bear in mind that in painting and in sculpture too he began by copying. On the other hand, the phraseology of Dante and Petrarch was like a second vocabulary in the sixteenth century, used so currently that it had become almost anonymous. Michelangelo's humility as poet is shown by the fact that he began a collection of verses for printing and then left it aside and did nothing with it. His rhymes were published (and badly) by his nephew, almost a half-century after his death.

The complementary and supplementary function of Michelangelo's poetry is also demonstrated by other themes he used, for instance, the burlesque. As we have said, he had in his character much of the jovial Florentine, who likes to make satires and have a laugh. It was not for his sculpture only that Berni admired him — and Buonarroti, answering to the nickname of Fra Bastiano, proved to Berni that he could rival him also in wit. The irregular sonnet to Giovanni da Pistoia, the octaves in which he ironically celebrates the beauty of rural life, in a parody of Lorenzo the Magnificent's *Nencia,* the lament of old age in jocose

terzine: these are the proofs left to us of the jocular and often railing humor of the man who is supposed to have been always scowling like his *Jeremiah.*

In addition to laughter, he loved nature, despite the fact that no landscapes appear in his paintings. His world is all occupied by human figures. With great labor, when he was forced by the sacred text, he painted a bare tree trunk here and there in the vault of the Sistine Chapel, so that the serpent could coil around it, or Adam recline against it, or some drowning figure cling to it. In his *Holy Family,* now in the Uffizi Gallery, he filled up the background, where fifteenth century painters would have delighted to spread meadows and flowers, with a group of nude athletes. He makes up for this omission as well as he can in his verse. In those octaves which he wrote towards the end of his life, he resumes the theme dear to Poliziano and others and praises rural life. Now and again in his earlier poems, he also expresses his love of nature, always with succinct, but original and strong touches, as when he describes the labor of the fields in his sonnet to Night:

> *Quel che resta scoperto al sol, che ferve*
> *per mille vari semi e mille piante,*
> *il fier bifolco con l'aratro assale.*
>
> [All the soil left open to the sun, which penetrates a thousand different seeds and plants, the bold plougher assails with his plough.]

wherein the ploughman is seen in his heroic aspect, as

a warrior armed with iron, setting out for the conquest of bread.

He could not make a worthy sepulchre for Dante, as he had desired, but he dedicated two sonnets to him and they are among the most beautiful that he wrote. On the death of his father, whom he loved more than all the other members of his family (though that affection was not always reciprocated), he addressed to him one of the most profound and moving of his poems. All the poetry that he wrote as an old man, when the tools had become too heavy for his arm, which he composed perhaps at night by the light of a lantern, in his house at Macel dei Corvi, turns on such themes as his love for night, his gratitude to the Precious Blood of Christ, his repentance for time wasted in the "vanities of the world" and, with particular emphasis, his urgent sense of imminent death, death of the body for certain and the death of all hope, which he dreaded.

Death was the special preoccupation of that noble mind, who saw the end drawing near. Like all great artists, he desired to safeguard from death some dearer and more perfect creation, with that art which arrests a concept and makes it eternal.

He had always hoped to triumph over the brevity of life through his sculpture by incorporating beauty of form for all time in indestructible stone. But, as a Platonist, there was also dominant in his thought

the sense of our universal imprisonment: figures are imprisoned in rock and souls are imprisoned in the body. Just as the statue-maker can deliver with his tools the god who is in the block of stone, so the supreme Artist, God, delivers imprisoned souls by the death of the flesh. Michelangelo was both a Christian and a Platonist, like the oldest friends of his Florentine youth. Before marble, he knew himself to be a wonder-worker who could strike off all bonds; but, like Dante, he knew too that he was a worm whom death, by breaking the cocoon of clay, could transmute into a pure spirit. So the obsession of death is always present in his verse. One might say there is not one composition in which its name does not appear, or the terror of it, or the desire for it. Even when he speaks of love, he cannot get away from the thought of death.

L'anima mia che con la morte parla
e seco di sè stessa si consiglia

. . .

Con la morte m'accordo
stanco e vicino all'ultima parola.

[My soul converses with death, and they take counsel together. . .
Now weary and nearing my last word, I have come to an understanding with death.]

He even attempted (see n. CXXXVI) a *Song of Skeletons,* which recalls, though in a loftier tone, that carnival song of Antonio Alamanni.

The story is also told that, half-way up the stairs of his house, he drew a skeleton in relief, standing upright and bearing on its shoulder a coffin, on which was inscribed:

Io dico a voi, c'al mondo avete dato
l'anima e'l corpo e lo spirito 'nsieme,
in questa cassa oscura è'l vostro lato.

[I say to you, who have given your souls and bodies and minds to the world, that your portion is in this dark coffer.]

The approach of death made him think of God, and anyone who really meditates on God must see Him not only as Father but as Judge: just as he himself had represented Christ on a wall of the Sistine. A saint like Bonaventura may call Christ *torrentem voluptatis,* but an idolizer of form, a maker of "baubles," even a great mind, knows that it has more than one reason to fear. Therefore Michelangelo forgets human love and the beauty of creatures and of woods, and even his art which to him was "idol and monarch," and he sees himself as a sinner kneeling on the ground, who is ashamed of his life in appearance so glorious, and who remembers only that drop of the Precious Blood which ransomed him and which can save him. He begs God to take him in hand and change him into a different being, so that he be not lost:

Signor, nell'ore estreme,
stendi ver me le tue pietose braccia
tomm'a me stesso, e famm'un che ti piaccia.
[Lord, in my hour of need, hold out thy compassionate arms to me; take me from myself and make of me one pleasing to thee.]

All those poems of repentance and adoration, which Michelangelo wrote as an old man, are beautiful—among the most beautiful in our religious literature. In four long centuries, between Petrarch and Manzoni, there is only his name. Very few of Colonna's sonnets can be put alongside his. That love of Christ which he could not depict in the wrathful God of *Judgment,* that hope of eternity and beatitude which was barely shadowed forth in the countenances of the Prophets, is sculptured in words and images in the mystic rhymes of his old age, when he overcame his diffidence as poet. Now indeed the poor artisan had said all that his strength permitted him to say: in St Peter's he had constructed the most majestic of God's houses; he had told God's story from the *Fiat Lux* to the *Dies Iræ* in the Sistine Chapel; he had finally confessed to that God, in whom he believed, all his misery and his faults and had invoked Him in lovely and noble prayers to spare him the "second death": now indeed the weary old man might die. Not that he was content or satisfied, because up to his last days he used his failing arm on a Pietà, but

that his little measure of satisfaction has left to men some of the few works and few words — fragments of a world glimpsed — which can console us for being children born of woman and of the dust.

The tragic contrast in the dual nature of Michelangelo is revealed even in his poetry. If he suffered through it as perhaps few have suffered, it was undoubtedly the origin of that baffling solemnity which has amazed all his successors. His real tragedy was not the tomb of Julius, but his own twofold nature. It was his greatness and his misfortune to be endowed with both the fervor of a Jew of the Old Testament and the genius of an ancient Greek. There were blended in him the aspirations of Isaias and the aspirations of Phidias. He would be suddenly transformed into the Apocalyptic seer thinking of eternity, of torments, of the judgment of fire and terror, and in another second, he would change back to the idolizer of beautiful form, of perfect modelling, of the human body. One must bear in mind the period of his formation under Lorenzo the Magnificent. In that gay and turbulent end-of-century Florence, the young man would be on one and the same day fascinated by the Hellenic grace of Poliziano and terrified by the Biblical denunciations of Savonarola. Thus he always remained. It was the same man who read the Old Testament, while delighting in Petrarch's sweetness; who loved Plato and could jest with Berni; who im-

itated Dante's virile verse and the octaves of *Nencia di Barberino;* who walked out from earnest colloquies with Vittoria Colonna to enter into the buffooneries of Topolino.

There lived again in this resurrected Etruscan the fierce soul of a prophet of Exile and the mind of an Athenian sculptor. This interior conflict was the secret torment in the life of the crippled demi-god, but it is from this very contrast that his poetry was born: idolatrous at moments with the lovely face of mortality, but rising near death into an anguished prayer to the Eternal.

GIOVANNI FATTORI

Poor Fattori, too, runs the risk of being misunderstood, for the moment his posthumous glory began, the plastering of exaggerations began with it. A good honest face is never enough for the grandiloquent flatterers, yet God knows how rare such faces are! They must needs paste on over it, with hot emphasis, a beautiful, heroic, hagiographic, archangelic, golden mask. They imagine that they thus embellish the countenance and make it more worthy of the museum of fame, but in reality they hide it and even disfigure it.

One can say this much about Giovanni Fattori, that he was a right good fellow and a first-rate painter. If you consider what men are in general and to what a state Italian art was reduced in Fattori's day, you will think that encomium — which is quite true — very great praise and such as few indeed deserve. But these true, plain words, true and plain like the man they concern, are far too mild for our bombastic eulogists. Admiration, even when it verges on adoration, is one of the noblest sentiments of the human soul, and deserves to be admired in its turn. But it is not decreed that sincere admiration must use so much varnish and trimmings. Sincerity recognizes

limits and sees no need to attribute to the great man forms of greatness which do not apply to him, nor to place him in putative relationships which are quite unnecessary to one in his high position. But the flatterer knows no measure because the truth means little to him: he must call every general Cæsar, every poet Dantesque and every dramatist Shakespeare's twin. Mediocre people make the mistake of thinking that simplicity detracts from greatness, yet it is precisely under the most simple guise that true greatness is always found.

I can well imagine the worthy Fattori's amazement and his smile — for he had the humility of the genuinely great man — if he could read those pages comparing him with the Etruscans, St Francis, Giotto, Masaccio, Leopardi, Pascoli — the more names they know the more they add !

"My dear boys, what a noise you are making !" the dear old man would say, with that perspicacity which was partly his own, partly a Florentine trait. "Do you want to make game of me even when I am dead ? When I was alive, you made it a favor to buy a picture from me now and then, and cultured people called me an ignorant fellow and said I did not even know how to draw ! And now that I am in the next world, you want to exalt me to rank with the saints, with the prophets, with the mighty ! Now, now, children, this is really too bad ! Isn't every man's own face

good enough for him when it is an honest one ?"

Let us waive Fattori's humility, by all means; let us joyfully affirm that Fattori was great. But there are several kinds of greatness, and on no pretext should they be confused. Every great man's characteristic sort of greatness is enough for him, and it should be recognizable without embellishments or irrelevant additions.

We have here a great painter, the greatest Tuscan painter of the nineteenth century, one of the greatest of all Italian painters. We have in him, as it were, a strong and thriving oak tree, all irradiated by the sun; why, then, should anyone want to hang little balloons and streamers out on the branches ?

It is not my intention, however, to speak of the painter, but rather of the man, who was lovable and admirable in his unassuming poverty and ingenuousness.

Giovanni Fattori was born at Leghorn in 1825, the son of a poor flax-comber. And now that Leghorn has been mentioned, I gladly take the opportunity to say that the fame of Tuscan versatility has been most proudly upheld by that same rectilinear and mercantile city, both in the last century and in this. There was a time, some years back, when Mascagni was playing the *Parisina* in Paris and Cappiello was king of the French posters, and Nicodemi one of the princes of the popular theatre there, and Modigliani was paint-

ing at Montparnasse those strange pictures of his which today fetch almost as much as Cézanne's, when Paris was a sort of fief in art to the people of Leghorn. Then when Carducci and Chiarini met there together, with the fame of Guerrazzi and Bini still lingering, and Giovanni Marradi sang of his lovely sun-bathed streets, while Pascoli was teaching in one of his schools, and Vigo publishing volumes by Carducci, and Giusti the *Myricæ,* one might well say that the city of the Moors was competing strongly, as a centre of genius, with the city that had created her.

Fattori therefore was born in one of the most fertile periods of his airy city by the sea, and although his mother was a Florentine and he nearly always lived at Florence after the age of twenty, he will be for all time one of the greatest glories of rich Leghorn. I will not relate his life in detail, and anyhow there is little to tell. From 1845 to 1908, he did nothing but labor at that art of his, which he loved above everything, and for truth and sincerity in painting, which he never betrayed, neither for greed of honor nor for greed of gain. He was born poor, he lived poor, and he died poor. From the light-hearted indigence of youth, he passed little by little to the decent poverty of old age. If he sold but few pictures and these for small sums, he never sold his conscience nor his ideal of art.

All the heroic features of his life rest in that humble

pride of his, which even his friends sometimes mistook for simplicity. He displayed no other forms of heroism. Although he grew up during the *Risorgimento* and detested foreigners, yet he never carried a gun. As a young man, he went on some embassies to the Leghorn conspirators and that was all. Anna Franchi tells the story that when the Leghorn people, hoping against hope, defended themselves strenuously against the Austrians of Canapone in 1849, Fattori, although then twenty-four years old, remained shut up in an attic, drawing a Homeric battle. He was not a soldier even in 1859, and all he cared about battles was to paint them; in camps and during manœuvres, he used to copy his artillery gunners and horses from life. Some people cannot discern heroism unless it is in a military dress, and to them this abstention from war on the part of Fattori may seem regrettable. But one must remember that the bright aureole of battle is not necessary for artists, thinkers, or poets; to them it is given to be heroic in other ways, often sterner and more difficult ways. Courage is needed and sometimes very great courage, even to use the paint-brush and pen in a certain way, conquering prejudice, defying obscurity, ridicule, calumny, insult, hunger. The majority are permitted to help their country with their right arm; but the minority, a precious few, are permitted to help with the labor of the mind. Giosue Carducci, poet of the Terza Italia,

who extolled Garibaldi with such eloquence, never donned the Piedmontese tunic himself, nor wore the red shirt.

Fattori's character cannot be fully understood unless one recalls the two Tuscan generations which accompanied his youth and maturity. These generations have now disappeared (their last witness and representative was Ferdinando Martini) and the succeeding age is completely different, with altered conditions and changed minds. Fattori's generation was the fruit of that placid, grand-ducal shepherding which was never seriously disturbed by the aspirations to freedom of a few nobles, intellectuals, and peasants. Perhaps there was a flash, a storm, and then all the good folk went back to drinking and gossiping as if nothing had happened. Since almost every political activity was forbidden, the honest people lived their own life in an industrious and healthy backwater, enlivened by gaiety. The best among them devoted themselves wholly to work — art, science, or what not. But beyond that they took very few things seriously. They were good, plain, easy-going folk, prepared to endure misery, but not annoyance or sulks. They debated, argued, shouted; and then the old Florentine good humor would reassert itself, and they would amuse themselves by composing satires, or planning jests and practical jokes of the kind favored by Sacchetti, Lasca, and Vasari.

Although in the thick of the revolution in painting kindled by lectures in the Café Michelangelo, as well as by the counsels of Giovanni Costa and by the reports of Tivoli and D'Ancona just back from Paris, Fattori remained the same good, simple, jolly fellow, who would get through his day's work and then amuse himself in the evening with his colleagues in art, by simple games or naïve sayings, and who could stand penury, on condition that some grace and a few little pleasures went with it.

I think there is great, determined strength in this sane sort of happiness; in this unenvious stoicism of the artist hero, who accepts all the severities of life, provided he can make a beautiful picture between one smile and another. To laugh at his own indigence, to save himself by a jest from the humiliations of poverty, as Giovanni Fattori did, seems to me a most noble revenge; it is better than that fashion of the mourners who sprinkle their heads with ashes so that a little may get into your eyes and thus make you less ready to see through the deceptions of mediocrity.

One must remember that Fattori to the end of his life remained a man of the people and boyish; simple, therefore, in the good and the bad sense — bad to those who know little about the true conditions of art. The reason why Fattori's painting is so limpid, candid, serene, free from affection or pandering, is absolutely nothing but his character. Like all great

artists, he painted with his soul. His simplicity, which may have injured him in practical affairs, repaid him a thousandfold in the felicity of his creations.

Like all simple souls, Giovanni Fattori was always *in love*. I do not mean only with women, but with all that is best in the world: with skies, fields, trees, animals, young people. He was a man in love rather than a sensual man.

He married three times, and all three wives, to judge by the portraits of them which he painted, were rather plain women. He survived his third wife. A fantastic biographer could compare him to a Bluebeard, dwarfed and intimidated in comformity with the age. But Fattori always married for love (the third time he was eighty years old) and he wept with genuine grief each time he lost the companion of his poor life.

There are whispers about other loves of his, even in his senility, but we may leave these preserves to the evil-minded collectors of hooves and tails. The flight feathers were strong and soared high; what if the eagle hatches on earth when his life is in the sky? Fattori's heart was always warm, and fire destroys all baseness. His art is chaste and almost austere; he never painted recumbent models, or harem women, or Bacchantes, stuff very easily sold to people who want pictures as a sort of aphrodisiac. His painting

is not pretty, or graceful, or voluptuous, but rude, stark, honest: Spartan, not meretricious.

He loved, and painted too, the humblest, poorest, most hard-working people — miners, carters, soldiers, drovers, wood-keepers, shepherds, cow-herds. He painted few gentlemen, and only when they were friends of his — and very few women.

He was comfortable when he was stinted and ill at ease in the midst of plenty. An anecdote related by Fucini in *Acqua Passata* gives a good key to his character. Once a certain Cecco Bartolini, who was also a friend of Carducci's, invited Fattori on a visit to his house in Pistoia.

"I saw him off and he told me he would stay there ten days or so. Three days later I met him in Florence.

'Hullo, I thought you were with Cecco in Pistoia.'

'I've been there.'

'Oh, and you're back already ?'

'Yes.'

'Well, how did you get on ?'

'Oh, they had everything there.'

'How do you mean, They had everything there ?'

And he related to me that after two days, all the conveniences they had in that house, all their abundance, got on his nerves, and that the third day, feeling he could not stand it any longer, he had got into the

train and left them. Fattori explained to me, for instance, that he would say to his host:

'To do that little job, you would need a special tool but now who could hunt it up for us here . . .'

'I have it,' Bartolini would say.

Or, 'That sauce they get from England would go fine with this dish, but . . .'

'I have it,' Bartolini would interrupt, and he had it brought to him.

'That picture could be touched up and made almost like new with a particular kind of varnish, but . . .'

'Oh, I have that.'

To cut a long story short, there was absolutely nothing Bartolini had not got.

'You can understand,' said my friend Gianni, winding up his story, 'that I could not possibly stay in a house where they had everything. I was sorry to leave poor Cecco like that, but honestly, I could not stand it another day.' "

Heaven help us today if the painter has not everything he wants and something over: a well-appointed studio to receive ladies, with divans, mirrors, antique furniture, scientific easels, English colors, German varnishes, French engravings. The result is that we are less gay and less sociable; poverty has been renounced and joy has fled with it — and perhaps, with poverty and joy, genius also.

But if Fattori was very scantily furnished on his own account, he luxuriated like a great lord in the most marvellous wealth God has granted to man — nature. When he took his palette and canvases into the country he was really at home, and all the treasure of Solomon could not compare then with what his eye saw and his hand arrested and revealed. The lonely plains of the Maremma, uncultivated regions, wild bush, sea coasts where there is nothing but sunshine, taciturn and mighty trees like the secret thoughts of the earth, the delicate, pure skies of morning and evening, rocks set on the shore like deaf giants placed to guard the land against the onrush of the sea, burnt stubble, furrows full of rain water, rows of white willows, the majesty of dawn and the peace of long, solitary roads — all those marvels which the vulgar do not see and the mediocre cannot make their own were Fattori's infinite treasure, his lawful possession, acquired by right of conquest. Animals too, of course, formed part of this endowment — horses glinting in the shade, or cantering along pebbled tracks, stubborn donkeys harnessed to carts, sheep with their white muzzles in the grass and, above all other animals, oxen, steers, and bulls; white oxen between the shafts of red carts, bullocks blowing peacefully on the salt, grassy slopes near the sea; bulls, dark and menacing as remorse, tethered in their stalls, or thundering through the oak groves.

Fattori had observed and drawn and painted all those aspects of creation so many times and for so many hours on end that even in his studio, from a few notes and outlines, he could construct those vast canvases, airy and resounding with life, for the possession of which connoisseurs dispute today; for one of them more money is paid than he ever earned in the whole of his long life.

Owner of all the beauties of the world, and satisfied with poverty, what more could he desire ?

He desired little. Certainly not honors. He had some medals and diplomas, but he never looked for such trifles, which the authorities hand out so liberally to the mediocre. I have before my eyes the original of a letter of his to the President of the Academy, which reads as follows:

Illustrious Signor President:

Thank you for your kind reply. However, I must make a comment or two. The list was not obtained from the Ministry of Public Instruction, because they know already that I have several times refused honors; so much so that at the end of the year, I was asked, on their own motion, whether I would accept the title of *Commendatore,* and refused with thanks.

I repeat: it is not through political opinions, but solely because I wish to end my life simply and humbly as I have always lived; my interests and ambition are devoted to art alone.

Since I have quoted that letter, I cannot refrain from inserting another, which conveys some idea of how Fattori considered his office as teacher. It was written when he was on old man and is addressed to one of his pupils, a girl:

My dear Child:

You ask me to write to you, but what can I say ? If I tell you that I love you very much, well, you know that already, and you have proof of it and of how I desire your happiness: especially in art, I do all that is possible to help you, as well as I know and can.

Write to you ? But about what ? I cannot be sprightly any more, as I used to be when I was your lovely age . . . a lovely age yours ! You are just approaching life, entering the world where you will find many disillusions; we meet very few who really love us. But many envy us and they are glad to find the excuse of some slander to give vent to their jealousy.

For me the sunset is approaching. I do not know indeed what kind of sunset it will be, whether serene or stormy. I have nothing left to hope for or to desire. The years pass quickly and a day will come when you will have only a dear memory of your old master in your loyal little heart: he was an honest man and how affectionate !

Work and study always, child. Love art that is as simple and pure as yourself and you will always keep like that. This is my wish for you. Shun praise and do not let criticism discourage you. . . Take good advice when it is sincerely offered; take no notice of bad advice — in anything !

Do not believe in men: so few of them are honorable. Be on your guard against flattery, which always covers deceit and seduction. . . If you were deceived, it would be

the end of you, the end of your art, the end of your purity and honor.

Keep this letter, and when it is yellow with age and the stone over my dust is beginning to crumble, read it again . . . perhaps you will drop a tear on it and say "He was right, my poor master" !

Goodbye,

Your very affectionate master,

FATTORI

Let us pass over the tone of pathos natural in one who felt death approaching. But when we remember that Fattori never used to say to his pupils Do this or that, or Correct here or there, but Go out into the open air, look around you and paint what you see — which is the only thing a teacher can say — and on the other hand, that when it was a question of life and not of painting, he could give his pupil such wise and fatherly advice, as old as truth itself, but which came fresh from his experience and his heart, then we feel we are coming nearer to the soul of this good-natured honest man. He had the greatest consolation from the pupils of his later years: pupils only in a sense — they were young men whom he loved and who loved him in return. Out of the number, I would like to mention Plinio Nomellini, Oscar Ghiglia, Ferdinando Paolieri, Llewellyn Lloyd, and Giovanni Malesci. Even when he died, they did not forget him; the first four have written beautiful and appreciative pages on their old master.

I, unfortunately, did not know him. But sometimes, when I was passing along the Via della Sapienza, I used to see him come out through the little door of his studio, with his small round cap at the back of his head, with his white, drooping moustache, and eyes always bright and penetrating, but a little saddened in expression by the passage of years. To people who did not know who he was, he looked exactly like one of those old-age pensioners, so placid and cordial, whom one encountered very often in days already far distant, before our Florence had been disfigured by asphalt, smoke, the reek of benzine, exoticism, and luxury. Under this appearance of a humble little middle-class citizen, Fattori hid his unpretentious greatness as a revealer of nature, like the rugged bark of a tree-trunk hides the eternal sap within. And under those shabby clothes there walked our streets, in his glorious obscurity, one of the greatest painters in the whole of Europe.

OSCAR GHIGLIA

Men who spend their time daubing canvas and wasting tubes of color, in Italy and elsewhere, are far more numerous than the armies of Xerxes. Seeing that there are so many of them, it would not be worth the trouble to write about Oscar Ghiglia of Leghorn, if it were not that he is so unlike other painters from many points of view.[1]

Oscar Ghiglia, too, uses fitch-brushes to dab color over those smooth panels, framed in gilt or perhaps some poorer material, which you see hung on the cold walls of exhibitions and in the corridors of collectors. But his art is not like what is commonly produced in this fertile and glorious century of ours, already one quarter consumed by the fatigues of victory.

Oscar Ghiglia is an artist who does not paint merely with his hands and eyes. His painting is a prolonged, persistent attempt to translate something of his spirit into form and harmony. In his best moments, his art is the colored version of his deepest feelings. But I must stop here immediately to put you on your guard against one of the most acute forms of modern mental confusion. When I say that Ghiglia paints his own

[1] With reference to Oscar Ghiglia, see also my article published in *Vita d'Arte*, Siena, March 1908.

soul, through an interposed medium of lines and tones, I do not mean for one moment that he is what those who know nothing of art call a literary, or a poetic, painter. When one mentions the soul, the majority of people, who never look at anything in a picture but the *subject*, think at once of a pathetic story, a lyrical theme, and all that pestilential excrescence of sentimental or tragic pictures. The very last thing these people look at in a painting is the painting, and therefore they cannot conceive how an artist could manifest his intimate life in his works if these have nothing in common with third-rate emotional literature, based on some episode, fact, or anecdote.

On the contrary, there is absolutely nothing of the literary man about Oscar Ghiglia. His painting is as varied as life — landscapes, figures, still life — but it is quite apart from that facile pandering to subject. A table prepared for a meal, a child standing alone gazing before him, the nude figure of a dissipated woman, a round fruit-tree under a glow of light, the front of an inhabited house, illuminated by a struggling winter sun, a woman with her head bent down over a simple dress, a piece of royal material seen through the eyes of the poor man who really owns it — all those simple, isolated, decisive things are enough for Ghiglia to express through them his impressions of the world; not merely the beauty of the world,

but its enjoyment and suffering in relation to things.

The attraction is not in the object itself that is depicted, in its conventional and exterior semblance, but rather in that moment when the artist really *discovered* it, as though he had seen it for the first time. It is the sentiment with which that object inspired him in that second, under that light, in that atmosphere of humanity which his sensitive mind saw around it and tries to evoke again with the simple means permitted by his art. One of the most effective of these means is color, and it is the spiritual and almost illusive and fantastic fullness of color which invests with such profound meaning this artist's painting.

Ghiglia does not aim at producing what is called "pure painting." This school tries to exploit the world of phenomena solely for a cold play of lights and values, borrowing lines and harmonies from it, dissembling them and recomposing them, in obedience to the laws of a sterile and incapable minority. Many of his pictures look like still life, but with respect for the truth, the things he represents are not dead to him, but alive, warmly alive, alive with that life conferred by the invisible presence of man, and especially with that almost magical life which this artist breathes into them through the force of his strong feeling. A glass still stained with wine, an apple left lying on the tablecloth, a bunch of cauliflowers heavy in their sensuous whiteness, a single olive tree stand-

ing out against a field, the red roof of a new house, a gold-fish laid on a yellow leaf — all these things are not merely primary matter of visual pleasure to Ghiglia; they have an aura of gladness about them, a sense of interrupted and triumphant life. It is the function of art to render visible just that emotional significance with which the things of heaven and earth are always invested, not indeed to the indifferent or covetous eyes of the practical man, but to those more perceptive and affectionate eyes of the man who lovingly contemplates the great gift of God — earth and sky. Ghiglia's faculty of revealing even to the keenest observer the secret essence of the most commonplace things is illustrated best in nudes, in figures and, in a very special way, in portraits. I do not mean that, like so many other painters, he needs the support of the human creature to give life to his pictures. Every portrait painter, inasmuch as he is a man bringing men to life, is a sort of Narcissus, and when the artist is confronted with the eternal mirror of Adam, he is conscious of greater difficulty: he must preserve his own identity while entering into the life of another. Considered in its dramatic aspect, every portrait is a contest, the struggle between the person who contemplates and the person contemplated. Man is not made of flesh only, and painting is not a mere distribution of tints.

Ghiglia safeguards that fidelity obligatory on the

portrait painter because he unites his spirit with that which looks through the eyes of another. His portraits often reveal the sitter to himself, and thus the struggle ends in an embrace.

Art, in this way, tends gradually to restore the isolated individual to fraternity with the world about him, to promote brotherhood between man and man and between time, which denies the instant that it promises, and eternity, which preserves and fulfils. All has issued from God and all strives towards reunion with Him. The visible world is like a group of fragments with a remembrance of and a desire for unity: the poet with his images, the painter with his revelations, the philosopher with his concepts, are all merely endeavoring to find again the threads of the unravelled tapestry and join them up in order to restore the pattern.

Ghiglia's painting, solid, linear, compact, succulent — sometimes even too greasy and insistent — is no departure from reality, like those canvases of ambitious recreators of creation. It is a patient concord with truth itself, extracting from it, with the soul's illuminating choice, those lines and lights which make it such and no other, which make one moment a unique moment, not to be confused with any other. Ghiglia surrenders himself to truth in order to master it; he plunges into reality in order to light it up again from within its living centre. He is a poet painter in this

sense and, if our critics permit, a psychological painter, a Christian painter. When St Francis called the sun *brother* and water *sister,* he was not speaking merely as a poet, but as a saint too, who was giving lyrical expression to his mystical intuition. Therefore, whoever helps us to win back our fraternity with the fragments of the universe is a mystic and a Christian, even if he does not know it.

Art like that of Ghiglia presupposes behind it a human experience, an intenser life and, above all, sorrow. Light-hearted men cannot even make us laugh: Harlequin himself was a hypochondriac. It is the privilege of the afflicted to make discoveries in the spiritual world, but they have to pay sternly for them in advance and with interest. Unless a man has experienced suffering, he cannot give us any enjoyment. He must shed tears before he can see straight. Misery is the microscope of souls; it is the secret glory of many obscure and silent people; it safeguards purity, and is even a sort of relief to sensitive natures.

For a quarter of a century Oscar Ghiglia's life was stern and difficult, with no compensations or romantic diversions. He knows what it is to lead a wandering life, to incur the dislike of mediocre people, to suffer sickness in exile; especially has he experienced a poverty recurring like those fevers which exhaust the body. Even though in his early youth the aged Fattori loved him and tried to prove it to him as well as he

could; and even though he found faithful friends later on and appreciative buyers, still one cannot say even now that he is a success, in the full temporal and worldly sense. Even today he has not behind him a solid backing of buyers or patrons, and is forced to prove his right to live by his labor, month after month. Few know his works. Very few indeed know the best and most powerful of his pictures, which are almost all hidden away in the private houses of buyers. He has not exhibited for twenty years, although invited to do so, and he does not belong to any group, circle, school, or academy. He lives alone, with his proud, radiant wife, who is bound to all that is best in his art for many reasons and in many ways; she is the mother of his five sons, who form a crown of strength and youth around their father, and he, like the fathers of old time, is the ruler and king of his children. Besides his family, he has a few friends, who love him not only as the great painter who is not yet fully recognized, but as a keen and sensitive companion, who can paint with words and gestures too. But Ghiglia is not yet satisfied with himself. Like all artists who do not treat art as a hobby or an industry, he feels he has not yet said all that he has in him to say, nor said it as he would wish to say it, with that force which is the divine prerogative of genius.

In comparison with the period, the best of his past works are outstanding beyond question. But Oscar

Ghiglia is still consumed with longing for a more convincing perfection, for a more limpid response, for a more direct and integral revelation. His discontent is the badge of the predestined: the nearer they approach the light, the better they can measure the space of obscurity which must still be traversed. But every work is made up of words and every word of syllables. Ghiglia's painful sincerity in painting is a torment to himself, but to us it is an immense hope.

Today, in the fullness of years, of self-control, and of the mastery of his material, Ghiglia can begin from the summit he has reached and collect the scattered words to form the verses of the song. His very isolation preserves him from defection and temptation and on him alone it depends whether the fine story of Italian art shall register tomorrow one great master the more.

ROMANO ROMANELLI

Even at the bottom of the pit of Hell, Dante was recognized as a Florentine by the sound of his voice. You can see at once that Romano Romanelli is a Florentine — of the true and ancient Florence — by the spiritual characteristics of his sculpture, even if you never caught a glimpse of his bronzed face and prominent nose, which seem to be still illuminated by the sunset of Gavinana: not for nothing does Ferruccio figure among his maternal ancestors.

Had he been born under Rubaconte da Mandello, he would surely have set out for the siege of Jerusalem, or for the holy wilds of Alvernia or Camaldoli; born in the reign of Cosimo the Elder, he would have been apprenticed to Verrocchio or to Donatello and then, like one of those pupils who succeed by dint of admiring their master, he would have passed boldly beyond. But born as he was, in the reign of Umberto I, and having grown up in one of the most unbelieving and decadent epochs that Italy has known (the epoch, that is, of Masonic art, of the philosophy of that ex-priest Ardigò, of the science of the Jew, Lombroso, and of the Battle of Adua), the ardent young mind of Romano Romanelli felt the need of escaping from it. He took flight from the vulgarity of his fellow-citizens,

from their smug baseness and even from art. He went to sea, where there was still room for God and the chance of a more heroic life. He passed the greater part and the best of his youth on the sea, a restless navigator, equally ready to render free obedience or to take over the burden of command.

The son and the nephew of sculptors, it looked as though he had wanted to escape from the hereditary calling, renounce the art to which he was born, affirm the autonomy of his own generation, rebel against the almost century-old fascination of marble and chisel. If an absolute contrast can be established between any human and divine work, in nothing is it better illustrated than in the contrast between sculpture and the sea: the former all hard and rigid in form, the latter all wavering and indeterminate in outline. Sculpture redeems our enclosed spaces; the sea conceals and dissolves. But during night on the waters the stars speak more plainly of God. Every ship is like a floating monastery, wherein chastity is obligatory and obedience a rule accepted and necessary. Like all true sailors, Romano Romanelli was an ascetic and a soldier too, that is to say, he knew something of sanctity and of heroism. Therefore he could not free himself for ever from his destiny as artist. It is only the man who succeeds in being a perfect saint or an absolute hero who can look upon art as an inferior and superfluous occupation. For the man who only comes to

the beginning of such roads, and cannot walk on them to the end, there is no nobler refuge than art. Unless an artist has something of the saint and warrior in his soul, there is no hope of finding greatness in his work. One must believe and combat, one must be religious and valorous, one must be something of the monk and of the soldier, in order to create creatures out of matter and give them the breath of life.

After his long vigil of purification on the seas, Romano Romanelli felt obliged to go back and swear fidelity to the art he had abandoned. He had imagined he was escaping from sculpture for ever, but he had only prepared himself more fittingly for the real work of his life. Instead of making him spend a weary adolescence among tripods and engravings, Providence had benignly led him forth to model his soul, so that he might be more worthy to model the bodies of the sons of God. The sea had been an immense spiritual cleansing for him, and in his hand-to-hand struggles with the elements he had acquired peace of heart and the certainty of an unfailing Presence.

Ever since Romano Romanelli returned to sculpture, he has continued to develop. Except for the long and glorious interval of the War, he has served art with the same fiery devotion that Brother Egidio showed to St Francis, or the *grognard* of Austerlitz to Buona-

parte. His humility has gradually received the reward it deserved.

He has studied all and copied nothing. He has pondered on truth unweariedly, but he has not fallen into the abject realism of modern sculpture. He has discovered again for himself the principles of the early schools, but he has not become a slave to the dead archaism of what is powerless. If his sculptures sometimes seem to bear a resemblance to those of Olympia or of Rheims, it is because he has found out for himself the eternal principles of all sculpture, which are not exclusive either to Greek or Gothic. Up to the present day, there have been only four great races of sculptors in the world: the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Florentine.[1]

If you place in a line a Pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom, a God of Delphi or of Athens, an Adam or a David of the mediæval churches, and a Saint or a Madonna of our fifteenth or sixteenth century, you will immediately perceive that the countenances bear a fraternal and terrifying resemblance, expressing the same profound and powerful truth. The architecture of the human face, when matter is vivified by spirit, cannot be other than that. It is reality transfigured

[1] Modern French sculptors — celebrated in their own country with the usual Gallocentric mania of Parisians, and copied laboriously even by sculptors who pass for thorough Italians — do not count as a fifth race, because their sculpture is really only a mixture and an anthology of the four great races, with a dash of the negroid added.

without becoming anonymous or allegorical; a personality which becomes almost a symbol without losing the individual expression of a unique creature; it is the soul reclothed with that minimum of stone which suffices to make it recognized and adored.

Romano Romanelli belongs to one of those great races, and loves the other three with due affection. He loves them because he knows them; and he knows them because he feels within himself a sort of kinship with all of them.

The four great families of workmen resemble each other because they have the very same spiritual attitude towards life and their work. They were not thinking — like the majority of our venal and ambitious little moderns — of the paltry glory of their name, of the money to be earned, or of how to satisfy their intense desire for novelty and praise. They had the humility of believers and the serenity of artisans: they simply wanted the statue of the dead man to look the very same in appearance as the living man, and the statue of God to inspire in others the love that burned within them while they carved it. Through prayer, they were close to heaven; through nature, they kept themselves firmly planted on earth. They knelt down, just as the mystic and the servant kneel down in equality. Since they knew they were nothing but bondsmen and artisans, they were capable of mak-

ing effigies of gods and kings; because they were gentle and humble in their heart, they rose to the simplicity of greatness. Like everything that is most beautiful and most sacred, sculpture is a collaboration between man and God: if the artist has nothing to go on but his knowledge of his model and his own pride, he will turn out mediocre work; if he waits for God to guide his arm every minute, he will never make more than sketches. Grace from on high descends only on those artists who are determined enough to work even if God does not show Himself, and humble enough to know that they will never do anything great if God does not come to their assistance.

Romano Romanelli is not a religious sculptor in the sense that he makes only statues of saints and Madonnas, but he is profoundly religious in his mystic attitude of mind. He realizes that he is nothing but a poor workman who must transform clay with his modelling-tool and marble with his chisel; but he remembers too that he is a son of God and that God never abandons His children. He believes that it is mere manual labor to give a definite shape to clay or to chip off the surplus from the block; but he believes it is a form of prayer as well. If you reflect on the matter, every maker of statues is a modeller of toys, but he is also one who imitates God in the work of the Sixth Day.

Romano Romanelli is vividly conscious of this dual nature of his art — the irremediable earthliness and the supereminent dignity of sculpture. He knows that if he looked only to immediate reality he would fall into a clumsy imitation of truth, which is the negation of art; and that if he considered only the sublime he would fashion geometrically accurate but inhuman idols. The secret — which he won for himself after bitter experience — consists in the living synthesis of body and spirit, of the true and the ideal, of the human and the divine. He always begins with the creature, with truth, with the given form, but he neither copies it servilely nor forgets it for a moment. He is not one of those artists who perhaps make an outline from life and then, as they term it, idealize it, spiritualize it. Spiritualizing can be done only by a transfiguration of the first copy as it is being made, a transfiguration by a hand obedient to choice, ruling the eye. To Romanelli, idealization is not a work in two parts, first copy, then deform. To idealize means to select the model's essential features, those that reveal his true face; but this choice is carried out in continuous contact with the model, neither before nor after. Romano Romanelli's secret is to select while he copies, to transfigure while he has the figure before him. That is the reason his statues have all the solid compactness of earth and all the spiritual grace of heaven.

I said that Romanelli is a religious sculptor, and it is true. But of course this does not mean that he devotes himself to making statues for churches. On the contrary, his early works are heroic in the mythological sense and many of his later pieces represent the heads of sorrowful or happy men, or women crouched in hiding, like Eve, or pugilists in the act of flinging themselves upon an invisible adversary. It is not the theme which makes the music, but the inner tone of the man who creates it. In his faces of women, you can recognize more than the exact physiognomy of a human sister; you can see the traces of sin, or the heavenly candor of innocence. And in the bewildered severity of his male heads, even the blindest can discern the supernatural origin of man and his amazement at finding himself involved in the misery of the Fall. When he called one of his works *The Demon of Sarcasm,* it was not out of literary affectation. In that almost monstrous Cupid, you can recognize childhood contaminated by the inheritance of original sin. He has a figure of a recumbent woman, to depict the virginal surprise of rural divinities just awakened from the sacred slumber of the country; while in that likeness of Marchesa P—— all the falseness of the modern world of fashion and of the discontented coquette are subliminated in a painful and cruel caricature of woman.

I know only three of his sculptures definitely reli-

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gious in theme, *St Paul,* the *Child Jesus,* and the *Pietà;* all three works are masterpieces. In the upturned and wasted face of the Apostle of the Gentiles, there is none of the material atmosphere of the old statues; the ecstatic eyes alone, still recalling the third heaven, sunken under the immense arches of the eyebrows and overhung by a brow furrowed with thought, express an intense concentration of invincible life. The ear is as vast as an ocean shell and the beard as massive as a pile of rocky boulders. This is truly an old wandering Jew, superhumanized into a Preacher of the Resurrection.

At first sight, the Child Jesus is only a little boy; it is, as a matter of fact, the artist's eldest son, flesh of his flesh, little Raphael. But Romanelli has succeeded in transfiguring that fragile and delicate body, that face which is his own and therefore unique, into the Eternal Child, the Child that was expected and invoked, Virgil's *puer,* David's nephew, the Fruit of the womb of Mary and of the Holy Ghost. By the wondering candor of that reluctant little smile, and that uncertain poise on the feet, as though the child still remembered wings and felt at a disadvantage on earth, by that aura of absolute purity with which he has invested it, he has blended the human with the divine, united the Son of Man with the Son of God, as in the person of Christ.

He repeats the same miracle in the dead Christ in

Mary's lap. This Pietà is Romano Romanelli's greatest work; though it was not chosen for Santa Croce, it is infinitely more worthy to be placed in a church — and in that church — than all the works that competed with it. It really has the pathetic and unmistakable majesty of a masterpiece. The Madonna is full of sorrow, as a wounded mother would be, but she is solemn too, as the Woman exalted above all women. She suffers, but at the same time she is sublimely obedient, as she was from the moment of the Annunciation, and she has calm confidence in the Resurrection and Ascension. The body of Christ is that of a dead man, who seems to have become even more corporal and heavy in death; He truly bears upon Himself all the sin and sorrow of the world. But His face is no longer convulsed with agony; it is not disfigured by the fierce and crude realism of Spanish crucifix-makers: it is the face of a sublime sleeper, who reposes between one heroic enterprise and another; a hero composing himself in the interlude of apparent death after the superhuman labor of the Redemption. Dead indeed, but not deformed by death; dead, but with the air of One about to conquer death. If you study the simple lines forming the structure of that Face that was buffeted and kissed, you will perceive in this Man who was slain, the God who is always alive. And, by the dignity of its pyramidal structure ascending to a mystical point, the whole group expresses that

union of the corporal and spiritual, which is the summit of art and the basis of Christianity itself.

Romano Romanelli is now in the full noontide of his life and strength, and all his admirers expect still greater works from him. Reconciled with God and with life, a restless but sincere Christian, a contented husband and father, disdaining to compromise or debase his art, a loving disciple of nature, of solitude, and of the great men of the past, he has everything necessary to manifest triumphantly what he has in him and what is in every aspect of the world. If our petty tyrants in the Italian world of art are not aware of him yet, or prefer his inferiors before him, we need not be surprised or saddened. The great man has always had to pay for his greatness by a longer wait. Romano Romanelli can afford to wait, because his vigil is absorbed by the twofold happiness of creation and of faith.

THE EVANGELISTS

When you read the Gospels, you do not read a book.

A book is made up of black symbols on pages bound together. We respect the sentiments and thoughts of the writer; his book is his responsibility and his glory. But even if his readers call him "divine" in their admiration, his work is entirely human and the words composing it are words that will pass. Nations decay, empires are dissolved, languages become corrupted, literatures die. Even ruins fall into ruins and are finally covered over with the silence of centuries and of dust.

But the Gospel is no mere human composition. It does not belong to human "literature." Its loss is unthinkable, even when all else shall be lost.

It is the story of a God Who became Man among men, Who spoke and worked in a divine way in the name of God, from the wretchedness of the Stable to the anguish of the Cross.

The four men who tell this story with the humble simplicity of holiness, used their own memory for it, arranged it in their own way and gave it their own form: but the substance, the living and supernatural substance which sustains our whole being, was not given by men.

Therefore, like the books of the Old Testament, the Gospel is infinitely superior to every other literary or dialectical collection of documents; it is not a book, but a miracle, a posthumous incarnation of Him who loves each one of us even more than we can love ourselves.

No other group of words can be compared with these four stacks of celestial wheat which have fed and enriched millions of souls for seven hundred thousand days.

No human writing can be placed even remotely near the Gospel. Compared with the Blessed Virgin on Calvary, Homer's weeping Andromache is like a figure in melodrama. Compared with the Prodigal Son seeking for his father, or the Shepherd seeking for his lost sheep, Ulysses setting sail to return to his spouse is like a puppet in a fable. Æschylus, with his Prometheus courted by the Oceanides, could never have imagined such a terrible tragedy as that which closed on Calvary. Even Dante is nothing more than a marvellous fresco-painter of Christian truth and in his most tremendous *terzine,* he never reached any echo of the power of that simple prophetic discourse pronounced by Christ on the Mount, within sight of the doomed Temple.

Not Plato himself could penetrate all the mystical depths of the Fourth Gospel, and the witchery of Goethe's *Faust* would dissolve into drops of dirty va-

por, like a Sabbatical hallucination, at the sudden splendoring of even one Beatitude. What poet of this world, whether Kālidāsa, or Khayyam, or Li T'ai-po, or all the singers of the East, or the swan of Pietole, or the nightingale of Incisa, or the skylark of Field Place, or the raven of Boston, or all the songsters of poetic flight put together, created such candid and original poetry as that shining from the images of the Parables ?

The story of mankind, when a man learns how to read it, is like a wheeling of orbits around one single, fixed point: the Cross of Christ. The age of Antiquity prepared for it and prophesied it: the new Era developed and completed it. The same law governs the history of books and for nineteen centuries all the literature of mankind gravitates around those four laconic little books. All works which have survived are either written in defence or in illustration of the Gospels and of Christ; or indirect and involuntary demonstrations of what the world would be without God, or man without Christ: the works of Machiavelli, Shakespeare, and Leopardi, just to give three famous names, belong to this last class.

However a man tries, he can by no means avoid mention of the sole Being who exists in an absolute sense, God; and in speaking of God, he must necessarily consider Christ, if only to add to the spittings of the Pharisees: therefore he must refer to the Gospels.

In the system of literature, the Gospels are the Sun and all human writings which have come after them are only planets, or satellites of planets.

The great philological offensive against the Gospels began in Europe with the publication by Lessing in 1774 of some fragments of Reimarus. Thereupon armies of Russian professors, English scholars, French apostates, and international Jews, brought up all their guns of erudition and sophism to make a breach in some part of the four walls forming the castle of the New Testament.

This offensive was carried out by means of theses which became progressively more radical: "The Gospels were not composed by the men whose names they bear. They are not as ancient as the Church affirms (the Tübingen School dates the Fourth Gospel as late as 170!). They are not genuine compositions, but later mosaics, in which one can discover contradictions, alterations, interpolations. They are not sufficient to prove the historical existence of Christ. Christ is a syncretized myth, a Sun myth, a Babylonian myth. Christ never existed, and the Four Gospels are little historical romances for devotees of the mysterious."

Thus the infernal logic of absurdity mounted to the apex of the skeptical pyramid, stopped, and toppled down.

It is not possible here to summarize again all the phases and causes of the defeat; but one can affirm, with honest confidence, that the great offensive is a failure. The last push, within the Church herself, was called Modernism, and we all know how that ended. No serious historian today, even non-Christian, doubts the historical existence of Christ. The differences between Christianity and the pagan rites are revealed more clearly every day in the eyes of the very people who were blinded by a few external and partial resemblances. Even the leaders of German Higher Criticism themselves admit that the Gospels were composed, at latest, between the years 60 and 100, and John's authorship of the Fourth Gospel is admitted even by non-orthodox students. As for the famous additions and interpolations, nothing can be deduced from them except arguments based on the different personal methods chosen for explaining the development of primitive Christianity. Such contradictions as are found are mostly apparent and almost always refer to the minute details of events regarding which the substantial agreement of the Four Gospels is perfect. A non-Catholic poet, who was not even a Christian, but a Pagan and a Freemason, drew the conclusion from this hostile lay offensive a century ago. Wolfgang Goethe said: "Even though the Evangelists may not have written immediately after the events they described, yet I hold all four Gospels to be perfectly authentic, because one feels

in them the reflexion of the sublimity that emanated from the person of Christ; a sublimity so superhuman that it could only be manifested by a God who had come down upon the earth." [1]

But this fierce war of a century and a half was necessary and no doubt entered into the Divine plan: new ages require new proofs. Even antique treasures have to be examined and counted over again from time to time; and when goldsmiths and jewellers have exercised all their craft to report them spurious, yet are forced to issue certificates of genuineness, Christians who never doubted are glad of the result. The certainty born of humility and love through so many centuries is now reconfirmed by the pride of learning. After all the laborious observations through the critics' telescope, the Star that guided the Wise Men to Bethlehem still shines serenely in the darkness of the world.

But to us, who are obedient citizens of the Church, the Gospel is a fourfold marvel, which was handed down to us by four saints: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

It is right that Matthew should come first. When Christ called him, he rose immediately from his tax-gatherer's bench and followed Him. He asked for no miracles or sermons. He was so overjoyed that he in-

[1] G. P. Eckermann, *Colloqui col Goethe*. Trans. by E. Donadoni, Bari, Laterza, 1914. Vol. II, p. 348. (Conv. of 11/3/1832.)

vited all his friends to his house, together with Christ, and he even asked Publicans and Pharisees *too*. According to the ancient and famous testimony of Papias, which Eusebius preserved, he was the first to write down the words of Christ: "Matthew had collected and arranged Our Lord's discourses in the Hebrew tongue, and each one translated them as well as he could." And he preached Our Lord's discourses until the day came when he died for Christ. According to some scholars, he wrote his Gospel shortly after the year 40; according to Harnack, in 75. He wrote it, as Eusebius says, "by inner inspiration," and it is truly one of the most beautiful, if it is possible to grade admiration before four diamonds of equal value. Even that romantic Jew, Renan, inclined his obese person before the writing of the son of Alpheus.

I like to think that Mark was that young man, who went out clothed only in a sheet on that night of Gethsemane, when he heard the noise of the soldiers, and who then fled from them, naked, leaving the sheet in their hands. There was a wine-press near at hand, therefore a farm; could not that young man have been the owner's son ? From the *Acts* we know that the first Christians used to meet Peter in the house of Mark's mother and the choice of that house for those meetings leads us to suppose it was a little outside the city, so that they would be less noticeable. That night scene, that miraculous escape, must have made a lasting impression

on the young man. He certainly knew Who it was whom they had bound under the olive trees; perhaps he was present at the Crucifixion next day. He was the cousin of Barnabas and he went on the first apostolic journey with Barnabas and Paul; then he went with Barnabas alone; then we find him in Rome later on with Paul. But he lived a great deal with Peter (who calls him "my son") and it was from Peter he received the material for his Gospel, which seems to have been written in Rome between the years 40 and 70. He founded the Church at Alexandria and at Alexandria one day, after they had dragged him in derision through the whole city, they flung him down from a rock and killed him.

Luke was a doctor and, according to many, a painter too. He was from Antioch and was perhaps a Pagan. St Paul found him at Troas on his second journey, converted him, and brought him with him, and we find him at Cæsarea and at Rome. After St Paul's death, he preached in Achaia and was martyred at Patara. He wrote his Gospel between the years 60 and 70. Many had certainly so written, because he begins by saying that "forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a narration of the things that have been accomplished among us; according as they have delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word." To St Luke also we owe the *Acts of the Apostles.*

John, who is last in order of date, is the first in many respects. With Peter, he is first in love of Christ; he is first too in his mystical comprehension of the Galilean message. The Dying Christ confided His Mother to him; and in the exile at Patmos, John beheld, in times far distant, the heavens opening on the portentous horrors of the end. Tertullian relates that he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil in the persecution under Domitian, but that he did not die. He was sent into exile, and returned to Ephesus under Nerva, where he wrote his Gospel towards the end of the century.

The loving fisherman, who had so often rested his young head on the breast of Christ and had felt with his ear the beating of the Heart of Hearts, waited until his old age to write the things that he had seen and heard. During his long years of apostolate and solitude, he meditated on the words of the Master (Who, through Mary, was almost his Brother), and he perceived that these words had a deeper sense and in their very mysteriousness a more luminous sense than the first compilers had noticed. From this white-haired disciple's profound rumination over long years, his Gospel derives its distinctive character; it adds to the others, without contradicting them, and it illuminates all the other evangelical writings with the light of a more prophetic intuition.

Christian antiquity saw in these Four the fourfold beast of *Ezechiel* and the four living creatures of the *Apocalypse*. In frescoes, in pictures, in Dante's Earthly Paradise, we find the four Evangelists accompanied, or symbolized, by the four prophetic creatures: the Young Man, the Lion, the Bull, and the Eagle. The former tax-gatherer had abandoned his coins and behold him a Man. The former peasant, who had fled from the soldiers, from Might, is the Lion. The former physician, who had given up science, is symbolized by the Bull. The former fisherman, who had cast his nets aside on the shore, has ascended to the highest heaven and soars above the others like an Eagle. John is now the eagle who fixes his gaze on the sun; Luke, the Bull whom no one can master; Mark, the Lion guarding truth; Matthew, the Man redeemed from the most seductive slavery. "And the four living creatures," says the Apocalypse, "had each of them six wings; and round about and within they are full of eyes. And they rested not day and night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come!' "

The Man is knowledge; the Lion is strength; the Bull is fecundity; the Eagle is omniscience. The Gospel issued from these four virtues, attributes of God, and these are also the attributes of the Hero of this story in four parts: Who willed to become Man; who

was like the Lion in the desert; who was slaughtered as a Bull; who soared into the Heavens like an Eagle, in the glory of the Ascension.

The whole is fitted together again in that cathedral of symbol, which is built up week by week, in the annual and perennial poem of the Liturgy.

The Gospel, which is inserted therein, is the essential reading for a Christian: and it should be read daily because, in the case of this really unique book, there is no possibility of surfeit. Could a living man ever be satiated with the wine of life ?

But pure wine only might make fasting men dangerously drunk and so the Church in her wisdom dispenses with it the bread of the Sacraments and the other food of theology and exegesis. And many people have read the Gospels wrongly: not because they are obscure, but because some readers are either blinded by excess of light, or corrupted by pride.

The Gospel is a divine message of divine love, and it should be read with love: love of the Father, of the Son, and of Truth.

The Gospel, story of the supreme example of the Incarnate Model, should be read with the intention of making action follow upon meditation, making one's life conform with the reading.

The Gospel, supreme testimony of the voluntary humiliation of the Most High, should be read above all with humility, with the affectionate humility of the

shepherds and children whom Christ loved. Humility, which means adoration of Him still speaking to us from sky and mountain, and obedience to the heirs of the fortunate men to whom the Gospel was entrusted, before and after the Resurrection.

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

CHRISTIANITY simply means the imitation of Christ.

A true Christian must strive to the best of his ability to copy Christ, to be a plagiarist of Christ, a shadow of Christ. A Christian can have no other way of living through this earthly day as a preface to the perpetuity of Paradise. He has one sole duty: to spell out on his knees the little verses of the Gospel and take them for his working orders each morning of this life, which death is devouring every moment.

God came down among us and became man; man must climb up towards Him and become like God. In addition to this obligatory ascent, Life offers nothing but the thorny flowers of business and pleasure, which brute bipeds call living and which the saints describe as the negation of life. *Dii estis,* the Holy Spirit proclaimed through the mouth of Asaph, poet and prophet.[1] These words were addressed to the Jews in the Old Testament and were extended in the New Testament by Christ "to all to whom the word of God was spoken." "And," Christ added, "the scripture cannot be broken."[2]

The future divinity of man is one of those luminous mysteries which can be penetrated only by angels and

[1] *Psalm* lxxxi. 6. [2] *John* x. 34–35.

inspired minds. God created man in His own likeness, almost divine therefore, but the Adversary, under the skin of one of the most repugnant creatures, deluded man into thinking himself equal to God and thus made him fall from that height on which God had placed him. A different kind of tempter had to come to enable him to climb up there again: God Himself became Man in the form most repugnant in the eyes of the world, that of a Poor Man, to rally mankind for the reconquest of Paradise. Christ made indemnity for the evil caused by the Serpent and He made mankind a promise like to that given by the Serpent in the Garden. Only when we come to examine the two promises, we find that their exterior resemblance is really total opposition. The Demon was the enemy of God and he taught man the way of pride and knowledge to make himself like unto God; Christ is the Son of God and He taught the way of humility and love. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." [1] By that "law of contradictions" which governs the divine plan, unless a man annihilates himself, he cannot acquire all things; unless he begins with a glad acceptance of evil, he cannot attain to supreme good; he cannot rule unless he knows how to obey.

The Incarnation was the supreme act of humility on the part of God; the Redemption was the supreme

[1] *Matthew* v. 48.

proof of His love. It would have been beyond the strength of man to imitate the Creator directly: God therefore had compassion on us and manifested Himself in the Second Person, under the appearance of Man, to make it easier for us to follow Him and imitate Him. Christ's life on earth is like a bridge which divine compassion flung across from condemnation to beatitude, to make our passage easier. God gave us a living example, which our senses and will can apprehend, to enable us to climb up again out of the abyss of the Fall to the pinnacle of the Transfiguration. The whole life of Christianity, including the Gospel preaching and the splendor of the Roman Liturgy, can be all reduced to a call and a help to imitate Christ. All books which men have used in climbing towards Him, from the book so entitled *The Imitation of Christ* to the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius — are only handbooks to teach Christians how to imitate the Man who was God. The Church honors as Saints those Christians who succeed in approaching close to Divinity while yet alive; one of the Saints who had the clearest sense of the Christian's duty to take Christ for his model was St Francis of Assisi.

I BEG your pardon, friend reader, for having repeated, and so badly, things which everyone should know, because they are the substance of what great Christian leaders have been saying century after century. But

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these truths are often obscured or forgotten through the ignorance of disobedient Christians and the coldness of Catholics who make a mere mechanical practice of religion; so to a great many Christians, even the ABC of Christianity sounds like the very latest novelty.

Francis cannot be understood unless we go back again to Christ. Because the secret of sanctity which lies in this essential duty of imitation is illustrated most strikingly in Francis.

More than a thousand years had passed since the Sacrifice and call of the Second Person. The Gospel had been preached to millions of men; nearly every city had its bishop; from St Peter onwards, the Vicar of Christ had had his seat in Rome; thousands and thousands of spires, pinnacles, towers, and campaniles held up to heaven the points of their crosses, almost like the motionless lances of an army in prayer; the sepulchres of saints were worn by the knees and kisses of pilgrims. Yet God was not content. There were still far too many who were Christians in name only; greed and cruelty were still powerful, strong even in the hearts of those whose duty it was to root them out of other hearts. Although the saints were numerous, they were still too few, because not all the baptized were saints.

God had compassion on our weakness and even on our obstinacy and sent another interceder on earth,

who would plead to Christ for men, as Christ had been a mediator between man and God. Unlike Christ, this new interceder would be truly man, begotten of man, and only man; but it was his mission to repeat the example of Christ to mere humanity so far as he could; to help men to imitate Christ and, through that imitation, reconcile them at last with God.

God had appeared among men in the form of a Man. Although God had thus condescended infinitely, even to the misery of creatures, yet weak, slothful, and tepid souls still seemed to think the Incarnate Word too lofty and too distant. Therefore Christ, who never abandons men but loves them with perfect love even when they do not know Him, caused His new Apostle, Francis, to be born on a hill of Umbria, near a lake which perhaps reminded Him of His Galilee. He made him like Himself in so far as it is given to man to be like God. Does it seem to you, who are only a man, too stern an enterprise to imitate One who was both God and Man? Well, here is a Christian who was a man like you, a Little Poor Man of Italy, unassuming in appearance, subject to your miseries, who can prove to you that your nature, however wretched and inferior, is yet capable of being moulded to a divine model. The experience of Francis is an approach to the experience of Christ: no-one can assert that what one man proved possible is an impossibility.

Francis indeed repeated as well as he could the lesson of Palestine to Italy. He copied the life of Christ, like a new pupil who copies the teacher's headline in an awkward and trembling hand. He revealed no new truth, but he preached by means of facts the truths which had been revealed twelve centuries before. He did not die on a Cross, but he was granted the ineffable grace of bearing on his body the five seals of the crucifixion he desired. Francis is an intermediate stage on the sinner's road to Christ, which makes it easier for the sinner to toil up from the mire to the stars; Assisi is half-way on the journey to Jerusalem; the rock of La Verna is like a step hewn out by love half-way up the Mount of Calvary.

For seven hundred years now, the devotees of the Absolute have no longer any pretext. With reference to Christ, Francis is like a little footpath compared with the King's high-road; or like a profile traced in charcoal compared with the face of a live man. But the life of Francis, modelled on the example of his Lord and of ours, teaches us that the ladder of sanctity can be planted even in the dregs of sin to lead us up to the portals of divinity.

You surely know the life of St Francis. If you do not, read it in the *Fioretti,* in the *Speculum Perfectionis,* in the *Legenda Trium Sociorum,* in the pages of St Bonaventura, or in that life written by a

modern disciple of St Francis, who found his way down from the fogs of Denmark and atheism to the sunlight of Assisi: I refer to the luminous account written by the poet, Johannes Jörgensen. Here I merely wish to remind you of the dominant characteristic, or rather the primary cause, of the holiness of Francis.

In striving to imitate Christ to the fullest extent of his power, the Assisian was convinced he was doing nothing beyond the strict duty of every Christian. But his imitation gained the supreme reward of the Stigmata, precisely because he believed himself eternally unworthy of the least reward. With the infallible instinct of real Faith, he had discovered for himself the eternal secret of perfection: self-contempt. The word "humility" would be the right word to use, if it were not so debased by misuse. A man is even called humble now if he does not actually crown himself with his own hands, or if he blushes at a compliment. But the genuine, traditional humility of the saints is this: a loathing for oneself and for what one possesses.

The Saints understood that one must give away all before one can gain all; that one must be convinced of being in the depths before the heights can be reached; that one must recognize and confess one's own infamy before perfection can be approached; that, in order to make way for divinity, one must first

destroy that too human self-love, chief root of man's nature, the principle of self-satisfaction and of every failure.

Saint Francis — preceded and followed in this by all the saints — said: I am nothing. God answered him by calling him to the heights of Paradise, to that life which alone is life, to that glory than which there is none greater. Read in the Tenth Chapter of the *Fioretti* Francis's reply to Frate Masseo, who marvelled why everyone followed him: "Dost thou wish to know why after *me* ? Dost thou wish to know why after *me* ? Dost thou wish to know why everyone follows me ? I know why, through the eyes of the most high God, that look down everywhere upon the good and the wicked: because those most holy eyes *saw among sinners none viler, nor more inadequate, nor a greater sinner than I,* and therefore in order to do that marvellous work, which He willed to do, *He could not find a more unworthy creature in the whole world.* Therefore He chose me to confound the nobility and wealth and strength and beauty and wisdom of this world. . ."

The most heroic form of humility is obedience, because it is the most difficult and the greater the intelligence the greater the difficulty, yet Francis obeyed. He obeyed God when He called; he obeyed his Bishop; he obeyed the Pope; he obeyed all priests, from first to last, because he recognized in them, even in the least

worthy, the instruments appointed for the daily miracle. He effectively reformed the Church simply because he never proposed to reform it, unlike schismatics drunk with pride; and because he began by obeying everyone with authority in the Church, from the universal Father in Rome to the least cleric in the country. In his simplicity of heart, he desired only to follow the old beaten track and just because of his humble simplicity, he initiated a new era in Christian life. One of the most loyal observers of the Gospel, this Saint has nothing "evangelical" about him, as the word is understood by deserters and separatists. He accepted all: the mysteries hardest to our reason, like the penances hardest to our flesh. His life affords a marvellous proof, though not the only one, that the pretended contrast between the Gospel and the Church, which heretics have been raving about for centuries, is a gross hallucination formed only by the hazy imaginings of delirious pride.

Like so many of his brethren, Saint Francis knew how to combine obedience to the Gospel with utter and humble submission to the Church. He is the saint of all meek and loving souls, but he is at the same time the saint of order and discipline: an entirely Catholic saint.

If anything in the world could obscure the sanctity of a saint, I should be greatly concerned these days by

the popular, or rather, the fashionable, position acquired by the son of Peter Bernardone among those who are least capable of understanding him or imitating him. For half a century or perhaps longer, in this part of the world, out of all the flaming legion of the invaders of Paradise, Saint Francis is the only one who finds favor in the moleish eyes of monkeyish little Christians, and even in the eyes of many blasphemous parable-makers in league with the Devil. The life of the "Poverello d'Assisi," carefully shorn of the supernatural element, so offensive to the fastidious nostrils of "modern men," is permitted with gracious condescension to figure among those books on which the lady and gentleman "in the height of fashion" can fittingly browse. This is especially the case if his life is written by a Huguenot, a Lutheran or, better still, by some broad-minded believer in Nothing, dressed in some spiritual disguise. Those who deny Christ's existence are willing to concede the historicity and even, by a stretch, the perfection of Francis. Almost alone out of all Catholic heroes, the Reformers have taken him under the benign protection of their rationalism. And those miserable Christians, whom I can only describe as bats, because they are blind, look up to Francis as the saint of their choice, the ideal saint, the perfect saint, the everlasting rebuke to the subtlety of theologians and the paganism of the Church. These specimens of Christians know nothing

about the other saints, or suppose them to be too remote: St Benedict, all in white on an ancient mountain, is a patrician at the head of a factory of prayer; St Dominic is red with the blood of heretics and the flames of pyres; St Bernard is a voice commanding and condemning from out the darkness of the Middle Ages; St. Ignatius is the gloomy patriarch of regicides, and so on, from blunder to blunder. Such is the nauseating ignorance which in our day represents the mind of those who would fain be Christians, but who do not want to accept the perfect Christianity which consists in absolute obedience to Rome.

To such as these, St Francis is the real saint within reach, the familiar and useful saint, the saint who forgives everyone and everything, the saint who talks with birds and shakes hands with wolves, the saint who does not lose himself in dogma, but prefers to write poetry. In a word, he is the saint who can be unobtrusively deformed to serve the purposes of those heretical dilettantes, who though they flutter round the flowers of the Faith pretending to be bees, in reality are wasps who will never make honey.

Those modern devotees of St Francis have transformed the sorrowful figure of the Portiuncola Penitent into the image of a combed and smiling little saint with a pigeon on his shoulder. They have diluted the consuming corrosive of his charity into a sweet watery mixture adapted to the mystical garglings of

chlorotic and anæmic little Christians with a smattering of letters. They pretend to mistake the bloody marks of the Stigmata for decorative tattoos produced by imagination. All those falsifiers of Franciscan truth should inspire disgust in Catholics who love Francis for his humility as an imitator of Christ and as the gentle servant of Bishops and Popes.

The *Fioretti* are not addressed to such, but rather to simple Christians, who go to Mass and the Sacraments, say the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* morning and evening, and read the lives of the Saints, not as mere *Belles Lettres,* or, like elegant dilettanti, for their own æsthetic pleasure, or merely to find false confirmation for their dubious and slothful fancies, but simply for instruction.

The *Fioretti* are addressed to those simple Christians who see in the convert of St Damiano a holy companion of saints, a man who was a brother to men, the Standard-bearer of Christ, and a loyal subject of Rome. This vernacular compilation of the testimonies and traditions concerning St Francis is not only one of the masterpieces of early Italian prose and of the hagiographical literature of all time, but it is a book of devotion and as such it should be sought and read. Learned professors devote their time (so brief, so precious !) to searching for sources, parallels, derivations, grammatical forms, dialectic colorings, historical and geographical allusions, and they suffocate the candid,

limpid text in the stagnant pools of philology and stylism. Let us, who are humble seekers of Christ, seek Francis in the *Fioretti* as the piety of his brothers saw him. Men of letters have been endeavoring for some time now to annex this miraculous little book to literature. Let us leave them to carry on with it in the hope that some day some one of these wasters of ink and paper may perceive that under the words of the legend there is a man, that under the man there is a Spirit, that under the spirit of St Francis, Christ is calling, Christ is pleading, desiring them, too, as He desires all souls: even them, poor souls so heavily in debt and perhaps insolvent.

JACOPONE DA TODI[1]

The life of the greatest poet before Dante was divided by Grace into two parts, equal in time, but contrasting in spirit. The first period extends from his birth in the flesh (1230) to his rebirth in God (1268), thirty-eight years during which he belonged to the world. The second period dates from his conversion to his death (1306), thirty-eight years in which he belonged to Christ. In the former he was known as Messer Jacomo Benedetti; in the latter, as Friar Jacopone. First he was a student at Bologna, a doctor of law, an astute lawyer, a happy husband; afterwards he was a tertiary, a hermit, a penitent, a Friar Minor, a prisoner, a fool. For thirty-eight years, he was convinced he was one of the happy and powerful people of the world; for another thirty-eight, he longed to be despised; he labored to be and to appear nothing.

The other chief dates of his life go in tens: in 1268, his young wife fell from a balcony at a public festival and was killed, and Jacopone thereupon changed his life and became a Franciscan tertiary; in 1278 (when he was 48), he joined the Friars Minor; in 1288 (when

[1] *Translator's Note:* The English verse renderings of Jacopone's *Laude,* inserted where possible throughout this essay for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with his "Todine Umbrian," are by Mrs Theodore Beck, to be found in Evelyn Underhill's biography of Jacopone da Todi. (London, Dent, 1919.)

he was 58), we find him in Rome in the suite of Cardinal Bentivenga, Bishop of Albano; in 1298 (when he was 68), he was apprehended by order of Pope Boniface, after the fall of Palestina, and imprisoned.

He was in prison for five years and was set free by Benedict XI in a Bull of 23rd December 1303; in 1306, on the 25th December, according to Wadding, he died at Collazzone.

When Jacopone was born, St Francis had been dead only a few years and was buried only a few miles from Todi. When Jacopone died, only a few years were to pass before a proscribed poet was to write:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita. . .
[In the middle of the journey of our life. . .]

Jacopone stands half-way in that divinely privileged century dating from the Rule of the Friars Minor (1221) to the death of Alighieri (1321), like a kind of predestined link between the saint of Assisi and the poet of Florence. He was a faithful son of Francis and a worthy precursor of Dante. Francis, saint and poet, but infinitely greater in his sanctity than in his rhymes; Jacopone equally renowned as a *beato* and as a poet; Dante, infinitely more poet than saint. So Jacopone is the middle term: inferior in sanctity to the Assisian, inferior in poetry to the Florentine, but great enough to be able to grasp fully the sublimity of Francis and to lend some of his phrases to Dante.

What looks to the world like progress in the scale of art, from the rough *Laude delle Creature* to the truly divine *Canti* of the *Paradiso,* is decadence in the scale of Faith. Dante pays for the honor of being the greatest Christian poet by the penalty of being so much less a Christian than Francis.

The two halves of the Jacoponic journey are divided, according to all his biographers, by that sudden disaster which left Ser Jacomo Benedetti a widower.

His wife was one Vanna of the house of Coldimezzo. It seems he had married her in 1267, when he was thirty-seven, and she was probably much younger. One day, at a public festival, a balcony collapsed: out of all the number there, Giovanna was the only one who was dangerously injured. When her husband ran to unlace her to find out what her injuries were, he discovered for the first time that she wore haircloth next to her flesh. She died; Ser Jacomo died too to the world. Instead of being a prudent man, he became like a fool; the rich man became poor; the learned man, ignorant; the nobleman went about in rags; the maker of contracts became a poet of poverty.

The story of Christianity is full of those sudden conversions, beginning with that of Saul. But Christ Himself was there, in that sudden blaze of light on the road to Damascus, having willed after the Ascen-

sion to claim the last of the first Apostles as His for ever in the folly of the Cross. But at Todi, there was only a death, the death of a woman, of a beloved woman: could that suffice ?

It is the preliminary stage, the preparation, which matters most in conversions, because Grace does not kindle up unless the wood has been piled there previously: even if only a little bundle of twigs. The line of cleavage between what went before and what came after is never so clear cut that one cannot discern some anterior, subterranean work, sometimes unknown to the very subject who is to benefit by it. In Jacopone's case, we are reduced to conjectures, because the most ancient biographers, posterior to his death, tell us nothing about his former life, except general information about worldliness and avarice. But could it be possible for a moment that Ser Jacomo, even though a nobleman and a lawyer, had not been a little impressed by the Flagellants who, in his Todi also, martyred their bodies while they sang hymns, overcome by the divine folly ? He may well have jeered at them in words like others of his class, but within his heart was there not born a thought, a suspicion, a beginning of remorse ? It was not then very long since the German Frederick, poet of loves quite other than mystic, surrounded by Jews and Saracens, had given the impulse to that group who were to develop much later into Free-thinkers and the intellectual precursors of the

French Revolution. But neither Jacopone nor others said he was an atheist, and if God is and Christ has come, how then could one condemn those who scourged their bodies on earth, in order to secure the bliss of heaven for their souls ?

Moreover, if Monna Vanna was so pious that she wore a hair shirt, could it be possible that she did not try to lead back her husband to thoughts of his certain death ? And in the short time that remained to her before she died, would she have said nothing to him, when he was so stupefied by her penances and overwhelmed by her misfortune ? Is it not probable that she herself asked him to be persuaded by their tragic separation to change his way of life ? Might it not have flashed through Jacomo's mind too that his wife, holy and Christian, was dying for him, for his salvation, offering her own life in recompense to God, so that henceforth her husband's life might be such as to gain for him eternal life ?

Jacomo's wife was beautiful and good and her husband loved her deeply; her loss, in such an atrocious way, was a profound grief to him. But all the same, would the disappearance of a creature have sufficed to change the heart of a proud, avaricious man, who was carnal to the soul, unless he already had within him a strong disposition, although stifled, to look upon anguish as a schooling, evil as a promise of good, death as the beginning of a new life ?

And was the change in Ser Jacomo as sudden as tradition states ? There is a sort of confession which many attribute to him, though it does not appear in the first edition of his works. If it is authentic, it would seem that the battle between the old and the new man lasted at least a couple of years:

I'ho dell'anni quaranta,
Spero menar vita santa;
acquistata ho virtù tanta
che veder non se potrìa.

[I am forty years old and I aspire to lead a holy life. So far, the virtue I have acquired could hardly be discerned in me.]

It seems certain that his wife died in 1268, that is, when he was thirty-eight, and in this poem which relates his striving for holiness, he says he is forty. So, although two years have elapsed, the goal is not within sight:

Com'orgnon nel grasso involto,
così sto tra' miei raccolto;
la virtù commendo molto
e nel vizio sto tuttavia.

[Like a hog wrapped in its fat, so securely am I enveloped in my sins; I much commend virtue, but still cling to vice.]

And he continues to explain at great length how he pretends to aim at living in the service of God,

while he is all the time the slave of sin and of the world.

Ben io so'l pazzo maggiore
che conosco el mio errore.
Tanto lume ho dal Signore
che per lui morir dovrìa.

[Well do I know the greater fool, for I see my erring ways. The Lord has given me such light that I should be glad to die for Him.]

Even if the poem were not authentic, there would still remain the psychological unlikeliness of such an instantaneous conversion. The old Adam does not die in one single day, especially in those who discover Christ only in maturity. Impelled by the fire of Grace, the convert at first has the constant determined will to change completely. But this will is wholly, or almost wholly, expended in preventing a lapse into sin, and it is not strong enough to spur him on immediately to the very perfection of good. The old man defends himself: he is in his own house; renounced, but not forgotten: he has on his side the power of habits, of routine, the weight of the past, which is sometimes a sort of remorse and home-sickness combined. The resistance weakens with time, and the new man, strengthened by perseverance, can throw up barriers against the dreaded returns. Then, with more serenity and in liberty he can mount quickly to that hill-top of joy, clothed in the rays of a Sun that knows no setting.

Anyhow, whether instantaneously or slowly, the complete change took place. The passage from the laws of Justinian to the laws of the Gospel converted the lawyer into a poet. The Christian God is love and the fullness of love cannot express itself except in song: most people are content to repeat the ancient hymns inlaid into the heavenly Roman Liturgy, like oriental sapphires set in pure gold. Those few who have the *charism* of harmonic phrasing break forth into new canticles. And nothing greater has ever been known in this world, among human works, than Sanctity expressed in Beauty.

By this time everyone agrees that Jacopone was a great mystic, occasionally a great poet, and nearly always a learned poet. The attempt of the Jew, D'Ancona, to represent him as a plebeian minstrel, a "Tumbler of God," something between a buffoon at a fair and a man suffering from religious monomania has failed. It has failed not through the efforts of other monomaniacs, but through the researches of genuine University Professors, such as Novati, Gottardi, Parodi, and Casella. We have returned, with a greater apparatus of proofs, to the opinion of Frederick Ozanam, who was the first true discoverer of Frate Jacopone's greatness.

"The real proof," writes Parodi, "that Jacopone was not what is generally understood by a popular poet, is there in his own *Canzoniere,* plain and accessible

to all. It may be objected that it was written in the Umbrian vernacular, but in what vernacular could it have been written? . . . The fact is that Jacopone's poetry abounds in learned terms, or in words which he learnedly coined (more or less well), and he rhymes, not indeed roughly as is supposed, but in accordance with the ancient Sicilian model of rhyme. Jacopone's so-called rude vernacular is, I would like to say if I were not afraid of being misunderstood again, a Todine vernacular, or rather a very noble form of Umbrian; let us call it a Todine classic language." [1]

I, who am not versed in Romance philology, would say even more than that. I would say, somewhat as the Victorian English used to say of Carlyle, that Jacopone writes in Jacoponic language. Certain poems of his remind me of Cellini and his bronze statue of Perseus. I always think that when the passionate Friar Minor could not find suitable words to hand in his native dialect, for expressing his ardor as a lover of God, or the doctrinal subtleties of mysticism, he had recourse to Latin; and when Latin did not suffice, he turned to other dialects, and when no available vocabulary could respond to his needs and he still required other terms, then he improvised and coined new words, his own words, flinging them in great haste into the furnace of inspiration, to forge them and make them shine out at last like their familiar sisters.

[1] *Poeti antichi e poeti moderni.* Florence, Sansoni, 1923, pp. 137–138.

The one-time doctor of the Bolognese University could not forget his learning between one day and the next. In that age the jurists were, next to the clerics, the real and true intellectuals and the only ones. Although Jacopone laments, and with reason:

Mal vedemmo Parisci
c'hane destrutto Ascisi;
[Evil be of Paris said!
By it is Assisi dead.]

it is not likely that he could have given up all books. It is practically certain that he knew some of the Victorine mystics, St Bonaventura's *Itinerarium,* perhaps Joachim of Flora, and some of the writings of his friends, the "Spirituals," not to mention of course the Old and New Testaments, upon which he constantly meditated and which are quoted frequently in his *Laude,* especially the writings of St Paul. In addition to the *Laude,* he composed a little ascetic treatise, which lucidly sums up the implicit results of Franciscan mystical life. If a man uses pen, paper and ink, he cannot get away from books and theories, however he may wish to do so: he will write things that the common people can understand, but which the common people would never have known how to do.

It seems to me that the Jacoponic lyrics could be grouped in a tetralogy: Confessions, Satires, Doctrinal, and Mystical dithyrambs. But all such groupings are

as artifical as they are arbitrary. All chronological arrangements and all, shall we say, theoretical guides, are more or less uncertain and weak when they propose to accompany step by step, with the logic of mystical theology, Jacopone's climb from his initial repentance to his final plunge into Jesus' Love.

Miss Underhill and Profession Casella have made two attempts of this kind, which are most useful for the explanation of certain *Laude,* and which show a knowledge of ancient mystical writers very rarely found among the laity.[1]

It is our more humble intention merely to indicate what seems to us the key-note of Jacoponic poetry. We refrain from any attempt to determine the different stages and paths followed by this soul seeking for true life, because we know from personal experience that these stages are sometimes contemporaneous in the soul, though the writers of the treatises mentioned set out the whole process in nice dialectical order, like a ladder with its pegs all in place. But on Jacob's Ladder, says the Book, angels were ascending and descending, just like thoughts in the soul.

Jacopone might have written, like Cecco Angiolieri later on:

[1] *Jacopone da Todi,* by Evelyn Underhill, London, Dent, 1919. *Jacopone da Todi,* by Mario Casella, Florence, Olschki, 1921. The most eloquent and profound pages on Jacopone are those which my friend, Domenico Giuliotti, wrote as a preface to his selection of the *Laude* (Milan, Treves, 1922), reprinted later in his volume, *Tizzi e Fiamme* (Florence, Vallecchi, 1925).

la stremità mi richer per figliolo
e i' l'appello ben per madre mia.
[Extremity sought me for son, and I indeed call her my mother.]

Like all men who can find no refuge in the mediocrity of compromise, he was one of those heroic Dualists whose moral plane is not lighted up by all the colors of the rainbow. For such as he, the prism has only two colors: the blue of heaven and the red of hell.

Before 1268, Jacopone was a Christian to all seeming. He believed he believed in God. He pronounced the words of Faith, but he did not live the Faith in his works. He believed in the World instead and so, logically, he gave himself up to the World. He surrendered himself to the World to have its gifts in reward: science, wealth, voluptuousness.

Then when, through sorrow, repentance, grace, the Cross, he discovered that God whom he had deluded himself he knew, but in reality did not know, it was not his mode of reasoning he changed, nor his method: he simply reversed his whole life. To change one's faith, that is to say, instead of believing in the World to believe in God, means giving oneself wholly to God as one had previously given oneself to the World. Since the law of the World is the exact contrary of the law of God, one must renounce the World if one is to obtain God.

If you think carefully about this bargain, it is by no

means meritorious for the man who makes it; that is, if he has Faith — real, live, absolute Faith. The World gives some part of itself for some moments, God gives Himself entirely for all eternity. The gifts of the World are mingled with ashes, blood, sweat, tears; the gifts of God, when the little earthly trial is over, are pure delight, perfect bliss, infinite joy.

Therefore, one renounces the less to possess the greater, the little for all, the ephemeral for the eternal: what man would not make the exchange when he is *certain* that God exists, that the other world exists, that the justice of God is ? Christ taught us this elementary truth in the parables of the treasure and the pearl: if very few do what Jacopone did, we can only deduce that real Christians are rare; that they are and always have been in the minority.

To exchange the pleasures of a short life for the bliss of eternal life; to give up the crumbs of the finite for a share in the infinite; to accept misery in order to enjoy in heaven immeasurable and perpetual wealth: that is the *deal* proposed to souls by Christianity.

And how can we perfectly fulfil the divine contract ? By uniting with God, by becoming one with Him, by surrendering to Him all that we are and have (and it is so little !). By living in Him who is Goodness, we become holy; by living in Him who is Omnipotence, we become capable of miracles; by living in Him who is Omniscience, we learn what no human

wisdom could teach; by living in Him who is Eternal, we too become eternal. This supreme union is called Love and it cannot be reached except through Love.

What does it mean "to love" ? To give all to the beloved, to become his property, to become one thing with him. This perfect love is not possible between creatures, but it is possible between the creature and God. God possesses in superabundance all that we lack; with His unquenchable flame, He can kindle our feeble glow; He extends one atom of His power to our weakness and immediately we feel ourselves transported to His side. "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me," (*Gal.* ii 20) exclaimed St Paul. The man who has reached this height has nothing more to seek: he has become deified, and participates in God in that measure in which the finite can share in the infinite.

Therefore if we are to live in Christ, we must live no longer in ourselves, nor in Paul, nor in James, nor in John. Self-love is the greatest obstacle to perfect love, to the union between man and God. Therefore the Christian desiring at all costs to win Love by love must act contrary to all ordinary men.

He must hate himself instead of loving himself, so Jacopone sings:

O alta penitenza — en mio odio fondata. (L. iv)
[O lofty penance — grounded on self-hatred.]

He must practise humility instead of pride, and if humility is not enough, humiliation, even annihilation, what Jacopone calls *nichilità.*

Non posso esser renato
s'io en men non so morto,
anichilato en tutto.
[I cannot be reborn
Till mine own self be dead;
my life outpoured, outshed.] (L. XXXIX)

He must cultivate love of poverty instead of love of wealth:

O Amor de povertate,
regno de tranquillitate!

. . .

Povertate è nulla avere
e nulla cosa poi volere;
ed omne cosa possedere
en spirito de libertate.
[O Love of Holy Poverty!
Thou kingdom of Tranquillity!

. . .

Poverty has nothing in her hand,
Nothing craves, in sea, or sky, or land:
Hath the Universe at her command!
Dwelling in the heart of Liberty.] (L. LX)

He must substitute love of suffering for love of pleasure:

O Signor, per cortesia,
mandame la malsania!

[I pray Thee, Lord, in courtesy
Send cruel sickness down to me.] (L. XLVIII)

He must substitute the contemplation of death for love of life:

Quando t'alegri, omo de altura,
va', pone mente a la sepultura.
[When thou art merry, and thy head is high,
Think on the grave, O Man, where thou must lie.] (L. XXV.)

He must substitute divine folly for the things of human pride, such as science and reason:

Senno me pare e cortesia
empazir per lo bel Messia.
Ello me sa si gran sapere
a chi per Dio vol empazire,
en Parige non se vidde
ancor si gran filosofia.
[Wisdom 'tis and Courtesy,
Crazed for Jesus Christ to be.
No such learning can be found
In Paris, nor the world around;
In this folly to abound
Is the best philosophy.] (L. LXXXIV)

All this must seem crazy indeed to the plain man in the street. But if he considered it well, he would understand that it is supreme wisdom, if this premise is true: that a just God exists and that there is another life.

It is supremely reasonable to concede the little we

have in order to obtain all: to accept a brief vigil of sufferings and bodily renunciation for a happiness that is complete, noble, perpetual, ineffable. If I can make this exchange only by losing myself in God, why should I refuse to annihilate my mortal self? If I must hate myself and accept all manner of contempt and torture so as to merit the eternal love of God which will raise me up even unto Him, what does the price matter? For these few years I can be content with scraps of musty bread, since for eternity I shall be seated at my Father's banquet. I can clothe myself here in haircloth and sacking, because for eternity I shall be vested in the light of Paradise. I can endure cold, lying in the snow or in the caves of mountains, since for eternity I shall be warmed by the glowing fire of divine love. I hate my body and I am content to be despised by all, because for eternity I shall be the beloved of Him who is wholly Love.

When a man really has in his heart "the substance of things hoped for," could any choice be wiser or more reasonable? Therefore Jacopone's folly is ironical in a lofty sense: he is not the fool in reality, but rather the man who believes in God and yet lives as though he believed only in the World. The worldly atheist living an ascetic life would be a fool if you like, but the Christian living a worldly life is far more crazy. To those who have Faith, what appears to be folly in

Jacopone and in others like him is really supreme reason, the greatest wisdom.

This is the whole kernel of the Jacoponic system, if one can call it system: God exists and has given a command to men; if I am to obtain God, that is, eternal happiness, I must hate myself and destroy myself; I must renounce the World and look like a fool in the eyes of fools.

Anema mia, tu se'eterna,
eterno voi delettamento;
li sensi e lor delettanza
vedi senza duramento;
a Dio fa' tuo salimento,
esso sol te puo empire;
loco el ben non sa finire,
chè eterno è 'l delettare.

[My soul, thou art an everlasting thing,
Thy joys endure alway:
The senses, and the pleasures that they bring
Must vanish and decay.
To God then take thy way,
None else can satisfy;
There is a land where the Good cannot die
And happiness endures eternally.] (L. v)

Having arrived at this deep certainty, life is attained only in death:

O croce, io m'appicco
ed ad te m'aficco,
ch'io gusti morendo la vita.

[To the Cross I sprang,

On the Cross to hang
To taste true life as I die.] (L. LXXXIII)

And he is ardently sincere in the passionate invocations of his last songs:

per te voglio pasmare,
amor, ch'io teco sia,
amor, per cortesia,
famme morir d'amore.
[For Thee I swoon, I weep,
Love, let me be,
By courtesy,
Thine own in death, O Love !] (L. XC)

Infinite affirmation in nothingness; the highest life in death; the greatest reasonableness in folly; the fullness of love in hatred of self: all those profound paradoxes of the mystical life, forming the substance of Jacopone's poetry and alone illuminating it, are implied in his first decisive choice, between the World or God. In the middle of the journey of his life, the notary of Todi chose God for ever. A lawyer, and therefore a dialectician, he was led to the natural consequences of absolute mysticism. Deeply convinced of the truth that one lives in God only by dying to man, he lived this truth fully and expressed it forcibly in many parts of his verse. In those passages where he strives most ardently to pour out his love of the illimitable within the narrow limits of verse, where the sermon becomes a hymn and the hymn rises to

a cry and the cry ends in a groan, Jacopone is a very great poet, the greatest religious poet of the Italian Middle Ages, one of the greatest poets in the world. Shocking and crude when he wants to inspire disgust; bitter and resentful in invective; subtle and deep when he puts the mysteries of theology into verse; familiar and very tender when he depicts Our Lady in joy and in sorrow; inebriated with a sort of soaring and whirling passion in prayer, in invocation, in dithyramb — he lacks only one thing: that mellifluence so much admired by ladies of fashion and the smaller professors.

Christians, for the love of Heaven, excuse him that !

SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Let us have no mincing of words: St Ignatius is not popular. Even among Catholics, many admire him as a great saint but few love him.

You find the Pagan Goethe honoring the image of St Philip Neri; Sabatier, a Protestant, is devoted to St Francis; Shaw, an atheist, is enthusiastic for St Joan of Arc, but no-one outside the Church pays any homage to the founder of the Society of Jesus. Even the very Christians who revere him cannot get close to him in heart, nor illuminate him in imagination. When non-Catholics know anything at all about him, they esteem him merely as a politician and a mystic; but, as happens more frequently, when they are totally ignorant of him and his, they despise him as the leader of a band of hypocrites.

There are several reasons for this lack of attention, or aversion: first, as I have said, ignorance; secondly, hatred of the Society which is reflected on its founder and, lastly, the fact that, in my opinion, no real writer since Daniello Bartoli has used his art to depict the beauty of the life and soul of Loyola.[1] But there is a deeper reason, not so generally known, which is that

[1] I have not read the essay by Francis Thompson, published posthumously by Rev. J. Hungerfold Pollen, S.J. (London, Burns & Oates, 1909).

Saint Ignatius, because of his nature and the mission which he chose, is in a certain sense the most absolutely Catholic of the saints. The enemies of Catholicism, lapsed Catholics and (that great majority) lukewarm Catholics, are too remote from him in spirit to understand him fully, that is to say, to love him.

Now let us be clear: there are no degrees of Catholicism among the saints, because they all recognized and accepted the discipline of the Church and the authority of the Pope. But most of them, while being always perfectly obedient to the visible Head of the Church, devoted themselves rather to prayer, to the preaching of the word and to relieving misery of body and soul. St Ignatius united more closely those exercises of holiness with the direct defence of that earthly body of Christ which is the Church. This distinctive character, which was the force and purpose of the Society, corresponding to the urgent need of the time, is also the reason why its founder is so misunderstood by non-Catholics. These are usually attracted by the humanitarian or picturesque aspects of sanctity. Even Catholics, who are but human too, have a preference for the man who comes to bind wounds, or to fill hungry mouths, and they do not readily understand the man who sacrifices himself for the unity which is so necessary for the salvation of individuals.

You will understand more clearly what a novelty the Society of Jesus was and what a new departure it

made, when you consider the succession of great Orders, which rose up on the eve of peril, according as they were needed, to save the Faith and the Church.

The sons of St Benedict were contemplatives and peasants, but they became in the course of time rather like rich and powerful lords. Then the sons of St Francis and of St Dominic rose up as mendicant Apostles and they labored, poor men among the poor. But at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the great Lutheran revolt threatened, with all else, every form of monasticism and lo, the sons of St Ignatius banded together, teachers and soldiers, as their age required. All these orders are distinguished one from another by the different tasks which the different epochs demanded and by the diverse genius of the Founders. Thus, for the Benedictines, the distinctive virtue was contemplation; for the Franciscans, poverty; for the Jesuits, obedience. These had to defend and reconquer, which means they had to be soldiers, and no regiment or army could prevail without obedience. But among all Christian virtues, some of which are lauded even by non-Christians, the virtue of obedience is the most distasteful to the modern age. This is yet another reason why the Society of Jesus seems in such opposition to the inherent rebelliousness of these later centuries and is therefore so unpopular.

But, to a well instructed Christian, obedience has just as much claim to his whole-hearted admiration as

chastity or prayer: original sin, while being pride in substance, expresses itself in disobedience. If a man desires to reach the perfection of Adam before the Fall, he must cancel out in himself first, before every other mark of slavery, that wish to resist God and the deputies of God.

"It is more meritorious," wrote St Ignatius, "to give up one's own will than to raise the dead to life." These words will sound almost like a blasphemy to that Lutheran pietism which still today, down through 1789 and its innumerable licentious consequences, darkens the understanding of our modern half-idiots. But they are words of the profoundest significance because self-will nearly always means egoism, self-love, pride, a horror of any offence against our divinity. The famous *perinde ac cadaver* is only a violent metaphor, such as geniuses use, to say that the proud and carnal Adam must be dead in us first, before we can bring our soul to true life, ready for what work may be necessary, with desire to be united to the fountain of all life. But it is ever thus: if Epictetus speaks of a man as of a little soul dragging a corpse behind it, all the fine wits and the great geniuses and philosophers (who neither have wisdom nor love it), exult and applaud; but if a Saint speaks of a "corpse," those same noisy hypocrites are horrified and make loud outcry.

This absolute obedience which St Ignatius desired

and commanded was very necessary too for the gravest — although contingent — reasons. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Church was assailed, besieged, and dismembered as never before in history: she needed soldiers too, as well as men of prayer and mendicants. Pro-Roman Spain made a triumphant answer to heretical and separatist Germany in the person of the heroic officer of Pampeluna, the Anti-Luther.

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, the last thread of hope for the retractation of the frenzied Augustinian was cut and Charles V placed him under the ban of the Empire and had his pamphlets publicly burned. In the very same year, a valorous Basque cavalier was wounded in the leg by a French cannon-ball and was carried back home to the paternal castle of Loyola. In the long watches of his convalescence, this knight resolved that he would quit the service of the World and of princes and devote himself solely to the divine majesty and to the service of the Church. During these same months, in Wartburg, Luther too was shut up in a castle, not because he was wounded bodily, but because he wanted to be out of the danger zone to prepare thoroughly for his offensive against Rome.

Then in the year 1534, Luther, who had apparently won, published his famous Bible in the German vernacular — vehicle and powerful auxiliary of the Reformation; and in that same year too, in a little church

at Montmartre near Paris, St Ignatius and six companions made a solemn vow to bind themselves to the Pope's service, thus forming the first battalion of the great anti-Protestant legion.

These may seem coincidences, or mere external, superficial concurrences, but there are more mysteries, even in chronology, than are dreamt of by compilers of synoptic tables and historical treatises. That these two determined men were really the true antagonists of this early century (compared with them, Charles V and Francis I are like two naughty boys fighting over a broken toy) is clear for reasons much deeper than dates: it is clear from the defence which the Society of Jesus built up against the Lutherans in the north and which endures even today, and it is clear from the absolute contrast between the spirit of the unfrocked friar and that of the converted officer.

The man who lived with Catherine Bora stirred up rebellion and pride everywhere his influence was felt; St Ignatius made obedience and humility the very foundation of his work.

The infectious germ of the Reformation was the so-called "liberal interpretation," as though every German Margrave and every cobbler could understand and interpret for himself the inspired Books, by a sort of birthright, and dispense with the help of the Church, which was the custodian of those books from the beginning and which is directed by the same Spirit that

dictated them. St Ignatius, on the contrary, wrote these words at the end of his *Exercises:* "Debemos siempre tener, para en toda acertar, que lo blanco que yo veo, creer que es negro, si la Iglesia hierárchica así lo determina." Words which made the hair rise on the head of even the baldest skeptics; though with what consistency we know not, because skepticism and all agnostic and relativist philosophies begin precisely by postulating an infinity of doubts on the testimony of the senses. St Ignatius, by a deliberate and necessary paradox, wanted to drive home the necessity of submitting to the hierarchy. Nevertheless, man's liberty is always safeguarded. Each one of us chooses freely to be a Catholic, but when the first choice is made, with a free and sure conscience, we must honestly accept all its consequences. If everyone, whether layman or friar, were permitted to proclaim white what the Church defines black, it would be the end of discipline, the end of order, the end of unity, that is, the end of the Church. But since the Church was willed by Christ and is indispensable to those who follow Christ in Catholicism — if they are to save their souls — it is but right that the believer, even if he did not know that Christ gave His Church the gift of infallibility, should renounce his own opinion, which may be erroneous, rather than imperil the inestimable benefits which he and all members derive from the authority of the Church. It would be a minor evil to

run the risk of accepting what is wrong in some little particular, than to break down the edifice which shelters us and which is the sole refuge worthy of souls aspiring to the absolute liberty of heaven. Thus, if your father told you to close the window through which a little breeze was coming on a very warm day, it might occur to you that he was mistaken, but it would never enter your head to raze the walls of the paternal house to the ground, by way of protest.

If you carefully examine Luther's innovation, you will see that its principle is *sloth*. That very carnal monk discovered one fine day that his own strength was not sufficient to overcome the bestial concupiscence which is rooted in our nature and therefore, to escape from all striving and remorse, he twisted the sense of a text from St Paul and affirmed that concupiscence is invincible and that only the infinite merits of the Blood of Christ make salvation possible. A very convenient theory, obviously, because it dispenses man from all effort and work to make himself morally better and more worthy of Grace: a theory, as I have said, invented by spiritual indolence for the benefit of the idolent.

Divine Grace was everything to Luther and the human will was nothing. St Ignatius, reaffirming the complete and harmonious doctrine of the Church, insists on Grace, but insists also on the work of our will. Since Grace depends wholly upon God and we

have no other power over God save that of prayer and co-operation, he sets particular emphasis on man's part of the work. The Christian has full power over his free will and it is by means of that he must co-operate. Grace is necessary to accomplish our sanctification and to ensure our salvation, and it shall not be wanting in the measure of our correspondence. Luther waits, supine, with his mouth open, for God to deign to save him; St Ignatius taught us to travel as much of the road as we possibly can on our own two legs, even at the cost of great travail, and the supreme consolation shall not be lacking at the end of the road.

"We should use human means as though there were no divine means; and divine assistance as though there were no human means." This is the wise maxim of St Ignatius, which is the golden mean between the atheist self-conceit of the stoics and the slothful Lutheran doctrine of justification. It is a maxim which mirrors the full wisdom of the Catholic Church. She knows that every good effect is due to collaboration and that if man has infinite need of God, God also needs the active co-operating will of man, in order to save him. *Qui creavit te sine te,* said St Augustine, *non salvabit te sine te.*

It is not necessary to continue the contrast between the protagonist of the Reformation and the protagonist of the Counter-Reformation. Anyone who desires to study the results can observe that from the Lutheran

heresy (now withered and petrified in the countries of its origin), hundreds of creeds, sects, conventicles have been gradually evolved, through the inevitable paring away of individual error; whereas the Society of Jesus, although so calumniated, persecuted and even, at a certain moment, suppressed, yet succeeded in preserving a great part of Europe from the infection and in winning to Christ many parts of Asia and America. Today, this Society is one of the strongest legions in the Church and one of the greatest intellectual forces in the world.

Everyone can see the great fortress: both those who are consoled by it and those who would be glad to raze it to the ground. But the man who was its captain and builder is unknown, unless to the sons of his own household, and his life is little more than a legendary outline.

To bring this unworthy ignorance to an end, one should read the most authentic and significant document which St Ignatius left concerning himself, besides his letters: I refer to the Memoirs which he dictated, from 1553 to 1555, to P. Gonzàlez de Càmara [1] and to P. Gerolamo Nadal. These memoirs, secured after much pressure and transcribed with faithful

[1] Published in the original text (half Spanish and half Italian) in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu* (Monumenta Ignatiana, Series IV, Vol. I, Madrid, 1904, pp. 31–98). English translation E. M. Rix, London, 1900.

simplicity, begin with the siege of Pampeluna (1521) and end on the eve of the foundation of the Society (1538). Thus they cover only seventeen years, out of the sixty-five which the Saint passed on earth, but they were the most decisive years of his life and the richest in spiritual discoveries: they were the years during which the brave and ambitious officer of a regiment was transformed into the general of an army of ascetics and apostles.

The life of St Ignatius can be divided into three epochs, diminishing in length as they increase in greatness: in the first thirty years (1491 to 1521), he was a courtier and a sinful soldier; [1] in the following twenty years (1521 to 1540), he was a penitent and a pilgrim apostle; in the last fifteen years (1541 to 1556), he was a great captain of souls, a law-giver and a conqueror. But in all three stages, during which the Basque gentleman was led from the "sunshine house" of Azpeitia to the altar of St Peter's in the Vatican and to the choir of saints, the thirteenth son of Don Beltràn Yañez de Oñaz y Loyola remained in the structure of his character what he was born: a knight. From being page to Don Juan Valasquez de Cuéllar, he passed on, in 1518, to serve as officer to the Duke of Najera, Viceroy of Navarre and, after barely four years, he became a knight of Our Lady and a soldier of Christ, to end

[1] In 1515, he was implicated in a process, of which the result was never clearly understood.

up, after a long apprenticeship of study and charity, as a paladin of the Church and Commander-in-Chief of an heroic legion.

By the time he had completed his thirtieth year, his soul had completely changed. The gallant and swordsman had become a barefooted pilgrim, a mendicant student and, finally, a saint, but his *forma mentis* remained always that of a cavalier and soldier. His conception of the world was feudal and warrior-like. God is the Emperor and all must tend to His glory; the General-in-Command on earth is the Pope, who must be obeyed even to death; the Captains of the army are the Superiors of Orders; all the Faithful are the rank-and-file soldiery. In his day, it was a question of conquering new people to make them subjects of Christ and of the Pope and of reconquering those who were in rebellion against Rome; now conquest and reconquest are enterprises of war and require soldiers. The cavalier of the King of Spain becomes a cavalier of the Emperor of Heaven, but still always remains a cavalier. Instead of taking castles and provinces, he has to think now of how to conquer souls, but heroism is required for both enterprises.

When Ignatius was a boy, he used to read *Amadis de Gaula,* or *El Caballero Cifar.* Later he meditated on the *Vita Christi* and the *Legenda Aurea,* and then instead of holding up the *Cid Campeador* or *Esplandián* for his model, he strove to compete with Saint Francis

and Saint Dominic. Instead of imitating knights, he began to imitate saints, but both are heroic types, that is, men capable of great things, of difficult victories, who rise above the horde of mediocrities. Don Quixote emerged from reading the romances of chivalry a knight-errant born out of his time, without much sense; Saint Ignatius, on the contrary, gained wisdom from his reading and, when he ended, he was prepared to become a knight-errant of Our Lady and of Christ, a cavalier of the King of Kings.

Like all great souls, he would not be satisfied with anything less than greatness. He found it in the only goal that is immense and eternal, in the arms of his God, in the militia of the greatest majesty of all. He was born a soldier and he could not be other than a combatant; he was born a leader and so he had to take command. But invaders of cities and captains of infantry are very small fry indeed compared with deliverers of souls and leaders of Apostles; there is all that difference which separates miserable earthly fame from celestial glory without end. In his love for supreme perfection and absolute greatness, St Ignatius made his choice; he knew he would have to pay for the better thing in humiliations, persecution, mortification, and all the torments desired and even enjoyed out of love, but a knight is not fit for his great dignity until he has been tried and wounded. St Ignatius was a man who always aspired very high: the lady of

his choice, to whom this obscure provincial officer had even thought to pay court before his conversion, was none other than a queen, Germaine of Foix, widow of Ferdinand the Catholic; but he aimed still higher on that night of Montserrat, when he placed himself in the service of the Queen of Heaven; still a cavalier, but now inscribed in the supernatural chivalry of the saints.

This fixed thought always dominated his imagination, even in the grotto of Manresa, when he had renounced all the little greatnesses of the world, that the man who is really noble is bound to serve: even in his *Spiritual Exercises,* there appears now and again the figure of a King summoning his courtiers to conquest and recovery.

That explains why, when at length in the fullness of maturity, his genius devised the first statutes of his Society, he gave the new order — by a sort of instinct and necessity — a structure similar in many parts to military ordinances, founded as is needful on the absolute authority of the head and on the rigid discipline of the soldiers.

But the Christian knight, as he was in the ideal conception of *le Moyen Age énorme et délicat,* and as he still remained in wild Guipuscoa at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was not merely a combatant in jousts and a courtier of gentle dames: he was a hero who scattered the infidel, protected the weak, and de-

livered cities and nations. Therefore, St Ignatius exalted in his life this mission of knight and he not only waged war against heresy, but he became the servant of the weak, the succor of the poor, and the deliverer of souls.

All these evangelical and tender aspects of the life of St Ignatius are unknown to most people. Yet this side of his life is by no means the least striking and it is just what would make him more loved if it were known. From the time of his flight to Manresa, he devoted himself to the care of bodies in hospitals and to the care of souls in city streets and in all the haunts of men, whether in hovels or on ships. He lived on charity, but he always distributed again to the poor the greater part of what he had been given for himself. Sometimes, when he was alone in strange countries, he was known to give away all he had about him, and once he even undertook a long and arduous journey on foot to assist a companion, who had robbed him of all that little money which he had collected for his studies. He spent long years in schools and universities, not indeed because he had an egoistic mania for knowledge, but in order to equip himself for the defence of Catholic truth and so as to be able to instruct better all souls who approached him.

These twenty years of vagabondage, of sacrifice and of tender activity, were rewarded by visions, by beatific enlightenment, by celestial revelations. The sanctity

of St Ignatius does not consist solely, as many people suppose, in having founded the Society of Jesus, but in that he was, from the age of thirty until his death, an ascetic despoiled and martyred, a beggar who gave in charity, a sick man who cured the sick, a loving father to his brethren, a Christian who forgave his enemies, and who paid back generously, in a life of renunciation and goodness, the spiritual graces God had deigned to grant him. To understand him fully, one must see him not only as the law-giving general, such as he was in his later life in Rome, in the period of his triumph, the applauded founder of an apostolic and papal legion: but one must see him also as the barefooted pilgrim, who imitated so closely the humility, poverty, and charity of the Gospel and, finally, as that profound mystic who is glimpsed in the *Journal of Forty Days* and in the *Exercises.*

The *Spiritual Exercises,* like the man who wrote them, are more famous or more talked about than known. Although they take first rank among those ten or twelve books of Catholic piety which have essential value, they are not so familiar to Christians as the others, even to devout souls. Those who love the outpourings of a converted and passionate heart read the *Confessions* of St Augustine, or Pascal's *Pensées;* those who look for the sublime calm of the Christian rule read the *Imitation of Christ,* or the *Introduction to a*

Devout Life of St Francis de Sales; those who aspire to climb the ladder of mysticism meditate on the *Itinerarium* of St Bonaventura, or the *Interior Castle* of St Teresa; those who love the candor of holy lives delight in the *Golden Legend,* or the *Fioretti* of St Francis. Few people, except the sons of St Ignatius, assign to the *Spiritual Exercises* their real value. This is because few understand the true spirit and special purpose of this tremendous little book.

The majority of Christians are attracted by sentiments of pathos, or by moral counsels, and they are repelled by that dry, austere atmosphere that is breathed in the *Exercises.* All those distinctions, those divisions of the days and hours, those terse and imperious instructions, give one the idea of a devotional time-table rather than of an elevation of the soul to God. But these *Exercises* too, with their distinctive architecture, form one of the surest and most admirable bridges constructed by a saint to unite the earth to heaven.

The first difficulty in understanding them lies in this factor: that the *Exercises* are not meant to be *read* but *done.* The masterpiece of Ignatius is not a text upon which to meditate, but a spiritual rule to be followed out and practised scrupulously for a certain length of time. It is a manual of instruction useful to the director as a pro-memoria, and to the exercitant as a daily guide. St Ignatius is not emotional and he does not want to excite emotion, nor does he labor to present

new concepts in a beautiful form. He simply proposes to act as guide, hour by hour and day by day, to lead blind souls to the light, tepid souls to warmth, distracted souls to the vision of Christ, unstable and weak souls to the will of the apostolate. It is a pedagogical handbook, which must be filled in with the master's lessons and the pupil's tasks: the bare text has the same resemblance to the complete practice of it as a geographical map resembles the effective and concrete wealth of the country represented. If you take the *Exercises* as a book to be read, you make the same mistake as a man trying to judge the beauty and life of a person, from merely looking at his skeleton.

Like all true Christian books, it is a manual of the ascetic life, but it must be applied personally; instead of describing the upward progress of a privileged spirit, it invites souls to pass through a severe and disciplined testing.

The chief purpose of St Ignatius in the *Exercises* was to form perfect apostles, or better still, to test minds in such a way as to force them to distinguish clearly between the service of the World and the service of God. The practice of the *Exercises* is like a spiritual examination to decide the admission or rejection of candidates tempted by Christ. The exercitant who continued to the end, with the results experienced and foreseen by St Ignatius, and who then chose his road with a free conscience and in liberty,

could be inscribed with safety in the militia of Jesus.

Therefore the *Exercises* have an individual character which distinguishes them from all those other works, admirable and precious in their different ways, which we have named. It is said that when St Ignatius began to write the *Exercises*[1] in the solitude of Manresa, he was acquainted with the *Ejercitatorio de la vida espiritual* (1500) by the Benedictine, Garcia Ximenez de Cisneros, and was inspired by it. It may be so, indeed, although no absolute derivations can be traced.

But the powerful originality of Loyola's book does not consist in having reduced spiritual auto-education to a regular system but rather, as it seems to me, in that most fruitful principle of the *Presence*. St Ignatius appeals not only to the heart and mind, but to all the senses. His discovery consists in his suggesting to the Faithful that complete and living evocation of the mysteries which should inspire them and uplift them. For this daring and necessary task, he had recourse to the so-called "composition of place" and to the "colloquies." If the Christian meditating on the Passion of Christ wishes to derive real benefit from it, he must not be content to read the words of the Gospel and draw from them certain moral and mystical deductions. He must see the Passion, call it up before his eyes and in his ears, in all its exterior

[1] The *Exercises* were composed between 1522 and 1526. Few amendments and additions were made afterwards.

aspects of reality. With the powers of imagination, he must see before him the aspect of the country, of the streets, of the houses, of the persons; resurrect the very colors of life; listen to the words and the groans. In a word, he must see Christ before him as though He were alive among us, *today,* going on His journey of martyrdom and of glory. He must be so absorbed in this living *Presence,* that he must *talk* with Christ and with Our Lady, as though they were there bodily in the darkness of his room, or as if he were a contemporary witness of their life; and he must ask them for what he needs and confide in them and listen to the answers they make him. To this *imaginary presence,* produced by the converging powers of the enamored soul, St Ignatius gives more importance than all his predecessors, not excepting the writer of those "Meditations" which used to be attributed to Bonaventura.

The will excites the imagination and summons the senses to its aid, so as to obtain, instead of a cold reading, or a theoretical reflection, a complete and effective vision of the life of Christ in its earthly manifestations. It is a natural method: Christ is always alive to a Christian and, in a certain sense, the past does not exist; God is not the distant abstraction of the philosophers, but Our Father, who is ready to converse even now with any soul that knows how to call Him and understand Him.

This work of visibly presenting the scenes of the Redemption to our bodily eyes, vehicles of interior vision, had been handed over, in the Middle Ages, to the mural paintings in churches, to the sculptures in Cathedrals and, later on, to the rude engravings in the *Biblia Pauperum*. Christianity, illiterate but warm in its affections, knew the story of God and of His prophets and apostles much better than the devourers of books in our day know it. In the time of St Ignatius, Art was already becoming decadent: it still continued to depict Christian subjects, but in a Pagan spirit, paying more heed to material beauty of form than to intelligible fidelity, or to spiritual expression. Artists, instead of being anonymous artisans, or at any rate humble illustrators of the Faith, were changing into proud employers, out for gain, glory, novelty. They all wanted, as the modern phrase goes, to affirm their personality. Therefore, either because they were showing off what great men they were, or through some other ambition, they thought less about instructing the people than about their own whims or fame. Under the title of Madonnas, the new artists delighted to make portraits of their lady-loves, and they chose the Crucifixion or the Resurrection for a subject to display their anatomical knowledge, or to produce unusual effects of color, or genial contrasts of light and shade. Art gained on the one hand, in the sensual pleasure of the eye — but it lost on the other hand, in

spiritual splendor. As regards interpretation and mystical vision, all the religious paintings of Raphael are not worth one single fresco of Giotto. Art, instead of being an illustrated text for the people's use, gradually became the luxury and voluptuous pleasure of the rich.

Art was becoming attached again to Pagan superficialities and the genius of St Ignatius remedied this decadence without definitely intending to do so, because the Saints are not concerned with æsthetics. Instead of the material and perishable pictures on walls, he substituted the pictures of fantasy aided by the will, pictures which are always fresh and which can be evoked over and over again eternally. And thus he led back, and leads back Christians to familiarity by sight, hearing, almost by touch and breathing, with Christ the Son of the Living God. His method destroys the illusion of centuries and makes all obedient Christians the contemporaries of Pilate and of St John.

He knew that men are bound to the slavery of the senses and that they truly love only what they can see, hear, and touch. He knew too that their memory is weak and their minds slow to kindle. He desired to extend to all Christians, even those born thousands of years after Christ, the supreme privilege of the Apostles, of the fishermen of Galilee and of the common people of Jerusalem: to *see* Christ and to love Him. Now to *see* Him suffer and to desire to suffer with Him and for Him is one and the same thing and this

is the aim proposed by the perfect practice of the *Exercises*. On the plane of spiritual life, they abolish the distances of time and space, which separate us, but only through our illusion, from the actual presence of the Lord. Not only are they, as most people recognize, an absolute marvel of psychological wisdom; but they form one of those easy, yet miraculous paths, which saints have mapped out in order to give to sinners prone in the mire their guidance in finding a way upwards unto the triune face of the Godhead.

JOSEPH DE MAISTRE

Count Joseph de Maistre died, at the age of 68, on the 26th February 1821.

There are barren, colorless years, in which an anonymous multitude begin or end their period of necessary trial without the echo of renown. But other years are like times appointed for memorable departures and significant appearances: as though the famous men who were nearing death had waited until that moment to make way for certain unknown new arrivals. The year 1821 was just such a fateful year: Joseph de Maistre died on the 26th February; Charles Baudelaire was born on the 9th April; Napoleon, a man who had dreamed of possessing the world, departed from it on the 5th May; and on the 21st October Feodor Dostoievsky was born. The two men who died had believed in principles which preceding centuries had denied and rejected, Unity and Authority; and both of them admitted, contrary to the cowardly and unstable humanitarianism of the eighteenth century, the atrocious necessity of War.

Napoleon used to say he believed in God. As a matter of fact, he believed only in himself, and the moment God — who had chosen him as an instrument to chastise peoples and kings — grew weary of his

boasting, the delay of a general was enough, one little error in calculation, to land him a banished prisoner, out in the wastes of sea, on an island too narrow even for his daily walks, in the hands of that nation which he had hated more than all others. His work, which had seemed so miraculous and indestructible, was undone in a single night, like all works founded on pride and on the genius of a single individual.

De Maistre, on the contrary, not only believed in God, but in the Son of God Who was crucified, and in His vicar on earth. The whole story of our present century, up to recent days, has been a sorrowful and bloody confirmation of the doctrines he set out in his *Soirées de St Pétersbourg*. He desired unity of Faith around the Pope; unity of State around the King; spiritual authority, which comes from on high, placed over temporal authority, which often obeys what is lowest. He meant absolute authority, of course, because authority that is limited and divided is not true authority, but rather a perpetual conflict of ambition and arrogance, which obstructs the benefits of unity and stability, without even permitting the compensations of prosperity and liberty. The Pope at the head of the universal church, without schisms and sects; a King at the head of a state without arrogant cliques or civil wars; every nation a well-ordered and obedient family under the government of a father who must render an account to God and not to blind and fallible

factions; all nations united in one great family belonging to the truest and greatest father, who speaks at Rome, in the name of Our Father, Who is in Heaven.

A così riposato, a così bello
viver di cittadini, a così fida
cittadinanza, a così dolce ostello.

[To so reposeful, to so lovely a citizen life, to so loyal a citizenship, to so sweet a shelter —]

did the Savoyard patrician recall mankind, who were scattered, stricken by revolutions, decimated by the civil massacres of the Terror and by the military massacres of Napoleon. And it seemed for some time as though Europe had given heed to his counsel. But not for long: when the blood is infected and the heart poisoned, there can be no genuine cure, but only brief and delusive rallies. We are suffering today, and more seriously, from the evils which consumed wounded and feverish humanity now one hundred years ago. Men are more divided than ever they were: separated from one another by rivalry, hatred, self-interest, passion. No authority is capable of reuniting them: the old authorities, except that of the heirs of Peter, have either abdicated or turned traitor. They are reduced to mere simulacra of ceremony and legalism, where they have not been overcome by inferior powers, still weaker and more irresponsible, who have inflamed the ancient saddle-gall, and have made rulers pay more

dearly for their inglorious rule. No new authorities have arisen, nor can they come into being, because rulers who boast of being invested with power by the people are subject to all the changes, disturbances and whims characteristic of crazy and ignorant mobs. In cases where they have begun to carry weight, they have had recourse to far more brutal violence and more methodical blundering than the former monarchies. Out of the whole group of lawful and unlawful powers, either dying out or increasing in strength, there is not one real authority, but a confused medley of governments in dissolution against governments in formation, of envious classes against selfish classes, of violent minorities against arrogant minorities.

But where there is no authority, there can be no union; and no union is possible among men, even exterior unity, unless they are spiritually united, with their souls in concord on truth. Spiritual union is not the result of a common philosophy, or of science, or of exterior coercion; it is the happy result of one thing only, a strong faith shared in common, which guides feelings and unites wills. There is only one true religion in the world, that of Christ, the only one announced by the living voice of God. Now no religion could subsist without the order, discipline, and hierarchy of a Church. There is only one true Christian Church, only one founded by Christ Himself, only one that has known no interruption from Simon Peter

down, which still reigns today in the same place where Peter taught and died. The other Christian churches are chippings broken off from the rock of Rome, chippings which continue to split and crumble away; branches that willed to break off from the ancient tree and which have borne fruit in new and countless divisions, before withering. But the Universal Church has remained united under its ancient and lawful Head and to Her shall be united again, when God so wills, whether within a century or within a millenary, all our brethren who have been led astray by schism and heresy.

Meanwhile, there is no stable or sure authority and no perfect unity of spirit and we have all seen with our own eyes the consequences of this twofold and dire need. Our famous Democracy had promised material prosperity in exchange for spiritual order, and it has brought us to the verge of famine; it had promised liberty and it has but multiplied petty annoyances and restrictions; it had promised peace and it has brought about the longest and most awful massacre that history can remember. Our equally boasted Science had promised the emancipation of minds and it has turned them into imbeciles by setting them to stammer catechisms for the laity; it had promised unity in right reason and instead it has filled the world with theories and rival schools; it had promised happiness on earth and with its inventions it has but made man weaker

and the earth more uninhabitable. Men who have no longer a lawful temporal government, and who pay no heed to the sole spiritual ruler, are conscious of a secret desperation, of which they do not know the profound causes. They give vent to it by brutalizing themselves in pleasures, or by dreaming of some Atlantis or Garden of Hesperides, which would turn out in reality to be a sort of stables or barracks with mangers and iron bars; or they give vent by murdering each other to get possession of pieces of paper called money, or of pieces of paper called decrees, or laws.

This may seem a very long digression from Joseph de Maistre, too long no doubt for the inattentive, but infinitely too brief for all that should be said. However, it is not a digression: in his thoughtful solitude at St Petersburg, De Maistre had foreseen, with a logic which no philosopher has been able to prove fallacious, what the world saw taking place after his death. He said to the French:

> What have you to complain of ? You said to God: Go from our laws, from our institutions, from our education ! We want no more of you ! What did He do ? He withdrew and said: Very well ! Robespierre's benevolent rule was the most notable result. Your Revolution is nothing but a great sermon which Providence preached to mankind. It is in two parts: First, that revolutions are the result of abuses, and this part is directed to rulers; Secondly, that the abuses are infinitely better than revolutions, and this second part is addressed to peoples.

But De Maistre is one of those men who are more famous than known; whose name everyone knows but whom no-one reads; condemned without being heard. Well-informed people, in their glorious and impregnable ignorance, know one thing only concerning him: that he wrote a panegyric on the Executioner; or rather, they imagine they know, but as a matter of fact, they add a new load of ignorance to all the cart-loads and wagon-loads of imbecilities which so-called "culture" drags after it. With his rich depth of thought, De Maistre described the terrible greatness of that inhuman human being who is the arm of human justice, just as war is the instrument of divine justice. He drew a sober and powerful picture, far above the commonplace, of that accursed and necessary being, whom everyone detests, but whom no society, not even the Communist, can dispense with. "He descends from the scaffold," writes De Maistre, "holds out his hand, reeking with blood, and Justice flings him a piece of gold from a distance; he picks it up and carries it off between a double row of spectators, who draw back in horror from him. . . He is not a malefactor, yet no language consents to describe him as virtuous, for instance, or honest, or estimable. No such moral eulogy can be applied to him, because such commendation imports some relationship with men and he has none."

That is the tone, and those are the mingled feelings of pity and horror in which this *apologia* of the Ex-

ecutioner — equally famous and unknown — is written. It occupies barely two and a half pages of De Maistre's vast work, so packed with ideas! Thus is the apologist of Pope and King obscured — presented rather as the apologist of the Executioner, that he may be put in the shade, by so unjust an accusation: an accusation that touches home to the sensitive modern heart, which cannot endure the sight of blood, as we all had proved to us in 1914.

As a matter of fact, those who cry out loudest against De Maistre are the direct descendants of those decorous people who prepared and accepted the bloody autocracy of Robespierre; they are the nephews of those Puritans, who drenched the English monarchy in blood and who hanged, in recent years, all the Irishmen who succeeded in escaping from shell-fire and incendiarism; they are the sons of the Communards who shot their adversaries until they were shot in their turn by the Versaillists; they are the masters and fathers of those Bolshevists, who have signed more death warrants in barely three years than the old Régime had signed in thirty years. But the real man of blood, the ferocious fellow, the monster, the enemy of the people, is Joseph de Maistre, who defended the Throne and the Altar in befriending the Executioner.

It is not possible to sum up in a few pages the thought of this man, whom even Taine, who is certainly not suspect of bias, called, "a powerful logician,

an incomparable herald and a superb champion" and whom the Jew Reinach was good enough to admit was "a prodigy of genius."

He needs only to be read to be loved. If his first centenary induced some solitary individual to read him, even one man not yet made quite asinine by the elegant bombast of our present-day leaders, De Maistre's fame might still become glory and his name a force. At least two people in Rome should remember him: the Supreme Pontiff and Vittorio III of Savoy. The former because De Maistre is the author of the most persuasive book ever written by a layman on the authority of the Pope; the latter because De Maistre was for long years the faithful servant of his dynasty, even suffering for it misery and exile.

ALESSANDRO MANZONI

OSSERVAZIONI SULLA MORALE CATTOLICA

Although Catholics are citizens of such a universal Fatherland that it extends beyond present time in the Communion of Saints, and beyond the confines of earth into Paradise, yet in their work for the Church, not even they have always been able to free themselves from those threads which bind our transient lives to a period or to a nation. The Faith is one, the truth is one, the goal is the same — but the tasks, the methods, the means, vary according to the individual genius taking the initiative and according to the nation to which he belongs.

In the choice of those tasks which refer to the defence and illustration of Christianity, it would almost seem as though the various races had divided up the work. Orientals and Greeks have specialized in theology; the French have been orators and moralists; the Italians, legislators and historians; the Spanish and German, mystics. In saying this of course all due allowance must be made for an approximation, and it will occur to all minds that contemplatives of the first rank have not been lacking in Italy and in France. But it is certain that French Catholicism, from St

Bernard to Bossuet and from Bossuet to Lacordaire, shines out especially in eloquence; and no-one will wish to deny that in Italy we have something still more universally authoritative and famous than even the *Summa* of St Thomas and the *Itinerarium* of St Bonaventura: I refer to the weighty documents of Pontiffs, from the *Regula Pastoralis* of St Gregory the Great to the *Syllabus* of Pius IX, and the great Rules of St Benedict and of St Francis: laws and rules which spring from the tenacious and juridical cast of the Italian mind.

But Italy, for instance, has provided none of those intimate and consoling books, full of self-expression and guidance, to which every Christian turns when burdened with his own restlessness or frightened by his own dryness. The *Confessions* are by an African; the *Imitation of Christ* by a Fleming; the *Introduction to the Devout Life* and the *Pensées* are by Frenchmen; the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Moradas* by Spaniards. Nor have Italians provided any of those standard works of apologetics and polemics which have marked the development of modern epochs. I refer to such works as the *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle, Géne du Christianisme, Soirées de St Pétersbourg, Ensayo sobre el Liberalismo, Essai sur l'Indifference,* and the *Grammar of Assent.*

But since not only the juridical instinct is inborn in the Italian genius, but also the cult of the individual,

we have given to Christianity, in addition to the legislation of Popes and saints, the *Dialoghi* of St Gregory, the *Golden Legend,* and the *Little Flowers of St Francis,* which are books wholly ours and of universal fame. In all the rest — except philosophy — we have been less fortunate. The *Cristiano Istruito* of Segneri, the *Combattimento Spirituale* of Scupoli, and the *Carità Cristiana* of Muratori are neither so powerful nor so famous as those foreign books which they resemble in idea.

There is only one exception: Manzoni's *Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica.* This can be ranked with any foreign work of similar nature, not only because it was written by Manzoni, but because of the ideas it contains and the way these ideas are expressed.

It is said that Manzoni's spiritual director, Monsignor Tosi, ordered him to write this book, almost forced him to do so, by way of penance for his early lapse from the Faith. Thus Giusti related the matter to Sismondi himself, but without mentioning names, as far back as 1834, and the story was later confirmed by Magenta, Tosi's biographer.

Fearing that this origin may diminish the value of the work among those who are opposed to its ideas, some people deny that it came to be written in that way, or at any rate they reduced the matter to a mere suggestion. Tosi's personal evidence, however, re-

moves any doubts on the main point: *"Il a entrepris ce travail à mon instance pour arrêter le mal que peut faire et que fait réellement chez nous cet ouvrage"* (Sismondi's history). Tosi wrote as above to Lamennais on 12th April 1819, informing him that he was sending him shortly a copy of the *Morale Cattolica,* and one cannot suppose that he was boasting.[1]

But the French word *instance* is rather stronger than the Italian word for suggestion, and one may take it as probable that Manzoni would not have undertaken the refutation of Sismondi had not Tosi urged him to do so.

However, the rational and apologetic value of the work remains intact, even when we fully admit that the impulse to write it came to Manzoni from without. An individual and restive writer, by no means prolific, one who was always inclined to think with his own head, despite his air of calm submissiveness, who even went contrary to prevailing opinions and to his friends' tastes, Manzoni would never have accepted a suggestion, still less advice and least of all an order, if the idea suggested did not fit in with his belief and also with his inclination. At the age when he wrote the *Morale Cattolica,* he was not a raw little scholar whom one could set down to his desk with his theme in front of him. In 1819, he had already written nearly all

[1] *Carteggio di Alessandro Manzoni a cura di G. Sforza e G. Gallavresi.* Milan, Hoepli, 1912. Vol. I, p. 419.

the *Inni Sacri,* and they were quite enough as a pledge and proof of his return to the Faith, even as a writer. As for making amends for his past life as a skeptic, the practices of piety united with purity of life should have been sufficient even for the most rigorous confessor.

Therefore he would not have been under a strict obligation to submit himself to this imaginary "penance," even if imposed by an authoritative and revered friend. Very probably their desires converged from the first moment that they discussed it together; indeed it may well have been Manzoni himself, a great reader of history and of Sismondi, who showed Tosi those pages of the sixteenth volume of *Républiques Italiennes* which serve as headings to the chapters of the *Morale Cattolica.*

We do not know by what path Manzoni returned to the Church, but we hold it certain that it was an intellectual road and primarily through his consciousness of the need for a fixed standard of morals in agreement with the data of Revelation. Sismondi's pages offended in him not only the Catholic, but also that very conviction which had led him back to Catholicism. Manzoni could say to himself: "I returned to the Church through that very consideration, that only in the Church is there a sure and eternal code of morals. Now, if Sismondi is right, if the Church has been a source of decay and moral corruption in Italy,

then I was wrong, I reasoned falsely, and one of the rungs by which I climbed up here is suddenly missing from under my feet." It is a brief step from this to the conclusion that Sismondi was wrong. If wrong, he might do harm to those who never left the Church, and still more harm to those who had returned to it for reasons similar to Manzoni's. A believer, a convert, immediately feels it his duty to check this evil: Tosi's desire fitted in with that of Manzoni, who was in a certain sense put directly on his trial by Sismondi's accusations.

To this concordance of will must be added Manzoni's special aptitude for this kind of writing, half refutation, half apologetic; he had a subtle mind, with a didactic power occasionally tending almost to sophism. This temper of mind is illustrated in his letter on dramatic unities, and on Romanticism, by his discourse on the historical romance and by all his writings on the Italian language.

Called upon to defend his Faith, on a point which he took particularly to heart, and to show up by subtle reasoning the errors of an adversary to his religion and country, he certainly cannot have needed much pressure from Tosi, or much wrestling with interior reluctance to do a work he had not chosen himself: it was like inviting him to a wedding. We are morally certain that if Tosi had, I do not say ordered, but advised him to do anything foreign to his own convic-

tions or to his special aptitude, even with all the grateful respect Manzoni had for this friend, he would not have obeyed. The substance of his *Morale Cattolica* is the sincere and spontaneous expression of his Christian soul.

It was not the first time an Italian had arisen to refute the slanderous assertions of a foreign historian. The most celebrated of Manzoni's predecessors, but one whom perhaps he did not know, was the Abbot Spedalieri, a Sicilian and a democrat. At the close of the seventeenth century, in anticipation of Lamennais, this Abbot tried to demonstrate the agreement between the Gospel and Democracy. His theory did not seem to the Pope altogether mistaken, although he had had to suffer much through the mistakes of politicians in the name of democracy — that is, if the saying which Brunetière repeated so often in his speeches can really be attributed to Pope Pius VII: "Be good Christians and you will be splendid democrats."

Edward Gibbon, who had turned from Protestantism to Catholicism and had then left Catholicism to become a disciple of Voltaire, had not spared Christianity all manner of accusations as a cause of and an inciter to evil, in his famous *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788). Spedalieri answered him with his *Refutation of Mr E. Gibbon's Examination of Christianity,* a book which contains

matter most useful even today to the student of historical apologetic.[1] So far as I know, although Manzoni was a man of wide reading and of vast curiosity, he never mentions Spedalieri; besides, the latter had a very different aim from Manzoni's. The Sicilian defended the Christianity of the early centuries against a half-Pagan; the Lombard defended more particularly the Catholic Church, in her influence on the Italian mind, against a Calvinist. Anyhow, they were both Italians who fought in defence of their religion against a foreigner.

Manzoni was well aware of the difficulties of this kind of writing. He wrote to Fauriel: "If I tell you but the bare title, I feel it is of such a kind as to give rise only to gloomy forebodings. It is a refutation, that is to say, a type of work of which I believe not one example has survived, and a type in which the lowest passions in literature (and that is saying much) are brought most into play; thus I would like you to see it to judge what spirit inspired it."[2]

But Manzoni was wrong in stating that no refutation has survived: is not the great Christian apologetic of the early centuries a refutation of the calumnies and objections of Pagans? To quote two examples very far apart in time and in subject, are not Plato's *Apology* and Galileo's *Saggiatore* refutations of the

[1] Published in Rome, 1784.

[2] *Carteggio di A. Manzoni* (edition quoted), Vol. I, pp. 427–28. Letter of the 26th July 1819.

first rank, masterpieces which are read even to the present day with enjoyment and admiration?

And as to the danger of being overcome by base passions — "literary" into the bargain — Manzoni could rest assured. In the whole of his book there is not so much as one word, other than respectful, whether to Sismondi or to opposing opinions, even when these are obviously repellent to this most subtle antagonist. The volume opens with a eulogy of Sismondi — praise which is not affected and still less ironical. In the matter of historical research, Manzoni was by no means a novice, and he would certainly have noted any general weakness of method, or lack of information, had there been such, because to point them out would have been an argument already, indirect but not negligible, tending to weaken those few accusations which it was his intention to refute.

As I have said elsewhere, Manzoni was not always the placid and complaisant man whom many imagine, but he held that in intellectual warfare the best weapons of attack were irony and reason, rather than contempt and rhetoric. There are really two great families of spiritual apologists: one group that patiently ratiocinate and the other that appeal by passionate eloquence. The former address themselves particularly to the mind; the latter to sentiment. The former hold sway over only a very limited number of readers, because only a few can follow with sufficient attention

the delicate web of a rational fabric; the others attract and hold multitudes, because they touch those feelings common to all men, even the most simple, and they charm with the power of art, memory, and words. Reason works more slowly and applies in a more restricted sphere, but it is more enduring; the triumph of passionate eloquence is immediate and widespread, but it is more ephemeral, unless it be frequently renewed. The former group are apt to lose themselves in dialectic preciosity and to become pedantic and boring; the latter run the risk of descending to the improvisations of fine oratory and they tend to rhetoric and over-emphasis.

Both groups have given great and precious works to Christian literature and both have full right to citizenship in the Church who knows, in her marvellous wisdom, how to enkindle the torpid and curb the fierce for a common and divine end.

It is not necessary to tell the reader that Manzoni belongs to the group of apologists who aim at influencing the mind through reason and that his *Morale Cattolica* is wholly on the plane of reason, so much so that at times he seems even too detailed and meticulous. Manzoni meant to persuade and not move. He had recourse to feeling — and to the noblest and richest sentiments of the soul — in that other apologia of his, so lyrical and moving, the *Inni Sacri*. And he was to turn later on to a demonstrative apologia,

touching the heart through a narrative woven into analyses and poetry: I mean his *Promessi Sposi.*

But when he confronted the Calvinist critic, in his *Morale Cattolica,* it was a time for reason, proof, argument. And if Manzoni is a dialectician first and foremost in this book, he is always the artist too, and a severe, restrained, solemn eloquence, coming from the heart to touch hearts, sparkles up now and again through the even current of his reasoning. The few pages which precede the book, addressed *To the Reader,* considered a masterpiece by Borgognoni (who was anti-Manzonian), are reminiscent of Bossuet's most powerful perorations.

Although Manzoni's work is doctrinal in character and its substance is ethical rather than theological — yet the implicit problem in Sismondi's twenty-two points of accusation is an historical one. The Genevan attacked the Catholic Church for casuistry (to which the greater part of his criticisms refer), and, through Catholic doctrine, the morality of Italians. Reduced to a few words, his contention was this: Catholicism, by yielding to casuistry, has corrupted Italy.

In his Calvinist hostility against Rome, Sismondi united and fused the thought of two writers very remote from each other who would never have dreamed of finding themselves associated: Niccolò Machiavelli and Blaise Pascal. The idea that the Church, being

corrupt, has corrupted those who live in her vicinity, is found on a famous page of *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio;* the opinion that casuists have imperilled the purity of Christian morals by the deterioration of Probabilism, can be found in the *Provinciales.* The Swiss Calvinist married the Florentine's Pagan cynicism to the Frenchman's diffident Jansenism and so produced his fine anti-Catholic and anti-Italian syllogism: casuistry has destroyed Catholic morals; Italians have kept faithful to Catholicism; therefore Italian morals are corrupt and defiled.

But Manzoni, with a foresight which is a tribute to his acumen, refused to engage with Sismondi on the ground of history. Estimates and contrasts between nations, their fortunes and customs, can never have that certainty which exact and positive demonstration requires, unless one institutes a comparative enquiry on an enormous scale, extending to all aspects of family and civil life: an almost impossible enterprise, which would require more than one student of research and an indefinite period of time.

Manzoni knew that such questions can be decided, in so far as they can be decided at all in the sphere of reason, only by going back to origins, to roots, to primary concepts, from which all the rest — beliefs, customs and so forth, are derived. Therefore instead of cruising about uncertainly among the archipelagoes of partial history, harborless islands in the ocean of infinite

and obscure human truth, he boldly went back to first principles, examining the question point by point, with all the sextants of logic and the microscopes of analysis, to determine whether the morals of the Catholic Church are in contrast with the eternal, revealed truth of the Gospel; and whether development of dogma and devout practices in themselves, when they are not superstitious abuses by the populace, can have, or have had, those evil influences on the Italian character which Sismondi affirmed.

This is not the place to describe the plan and development of that most lucid book — alas, not finished. A summary, however well done, could not give a true idea of the depth of the work so rich in conclusions, applications, references, and even in little original personal treatises, such as that devoted to showing the inconsistency of utilitarian morality. It would be far more useful to provide a commentary, showing all that is new in the Manzonian apologetic and all that he took from Catholic writers, especially French, and adding throughout the commentary those reasons and facts which Manzoni did not record, or did not wish to recall. But commentators have not troubled much about Manzoni up to the present — yet, on the other hand, competent judges rank him with Alighieri. We have not, for example, despite the efforts of Petrocchi and of Pistelli, even a good philological, historical, and spiritual commentary of his principal work, the *Pro-*

messi Sposi. The remarks of Crispolti, Galletti, Cojazzi, Momigliano would be useful for a good commentary of the *Morale Cattolica.* These writers agree in holding that the kernel of Manzoni's mind was the Faith and therefore that his art cannot be understood, if we do not continually keep in mind his religious life.

Although this life is the origin and substance of all his writings, the clearest documents concerning it are the *Inni Sacri* and the *Morale Cattolica.* In his hymns, Manzoni is the poet with a vision of the great Christian mysteries grouped together round the Cross, like the moments of a divine tragedy. In the *Morale Cattolica,* he is the apostle, the dialectician, the historian defending and illustrating the truths taught to mankind from the Cross. In his hymns, the lyrical impetus of the convert creates images of resplendent holiness, from the night of Bethlehem to the flame of Pentecost. In his *Osservazioni,* the Gospel is alive again, after the experience of centuries and the testing by philosophies, in a conscience that never forgets, even in the sinuous windings of debate, the clear and tranquil light which the Teacher of simple people enkindled for all time between the fishermen's lake and the poor man's mountain. In Manzoni's beautiful and integral soul there were equally alive the poet who can transport us with the melodious music of the affections, and the philosopher who convinces and

persuades with the certain and lucid dialectic of the mind. Like Dante, but in a different form, he could unite the moving hymn to Our Lady with the syllogism against heretics. And so the *Morale Cattolica,* despite its air of a statement for the defence, is in reality the sequel to the *Inni Sacri* and the prologue to the *Promessi Sposi.*

I PROMESSI SPOSI[1]

It was a day in August and to say that the heat was tremendous hardly describes it. In the adjoining room, my eldest daughter was ill and feverish, with a high temperature that made her seem almost more beautiful. When her mother had gone downstairs to prepare those many things required in an illness, the child called me to her bedside and asked me to read aloud to her from some nice book. To please her, I hunted on the shelves, but I could not find anything which seemed to me appropriate. In the end, I chanced upon the *Promessi Sposi.* I began to read it out, skipping now and again those pages which might be tiresome to a young girl, especially when she was ill. I read it as well as I could, trying to put life into the dialogue, to give certain words their full value and certain metaphors their right expression,

[1] *Translator's Note:* A good translation was published in 1914 by Bell & Sons, Ltd., under the title of *The Betrothed* (Bohn's Popular Library, London).

and stressing the sweet cadence of the happiest phrasing. Presently I could see that Viola was enjoying it and would remain listening even for two hours on end, only that she was afraid of making me tired. I could read pleasure, changing to pity, in her lovely dark eyes; her lips, chapped with fever, smiled at Don Abbondio's terrors and trembled at Lucia's desperation, or at the sorrow of Cecilia's mother.

I had always been positive that the *Promessi Sposi* was not a book for boys, and that it can be understood in all its marvellous richness only round about the age of forty. (The richest is not loudly dressed, and one needs experience before one can recognize it among the masqueraders.) Yet I saw plainly in the eyes of my daughter that even a youngster of fifteen can enjoy it, provided she has some love for creatures and for the beauties of the world. It is like all those books which have not merely one theme, but a double and even a triple meaning: I refer to such books as *Don Quixote* and even *Hamlet*. The words are the same, always there, but every ten years or so one is impressed with a different part of the book; words which were read with the eyes only suddenly become the key to all the others, kindling up in a flash with a new light, which does not dim the first light, but revivifies it.

I had read the *Promessi Sposi* several times before — ten or twelve times, not to exaggerate — but always

for myself. When I read it out loud again, at the bedside of a feverish little sufferer who was dear to me, I discovered new concordances and harmonies which I had not noticed before and which perhaps others have not seen.

Pietro Giordani's posthumous preacher — I mean the late Professor Borgognoni — disclosed this fact to Manzonians: that the *Promessi Sposi* is only a novel after all, a long novel, too long for his taste, and that it is not suitable to get so enthusiastic over a novel, even if it is prolix.

I am sorry Professor Borgognoni is dead. He would be eighty-three years old now, the patriarch of men of letters and, together with Eugenio Checchi, the oldest of the critics. I am sorry: I would willingly have offered to prove to him, with reasons more reasonable than his own, that on the contrary the *Promessi Sposi* is a comedy, or better still, a tragi-comedy, to which heaven and earth set hand, the same collaborators as Dante had. I would have demonstrated clearly to him that this tragi-comedy, like the Poem of 1300, is a kind of general judgment in anticipation: and notice that this definition applies perfectly to all the great works written in the world, which are very few in number but include for instance *Don Quixote* and *Faust*.

There is no need to prove that the earth set hand

to the *Promessi Sposi:* the sky and the fields are in the book, wide rivers and lakes. Moreover, there are men in it, many of whom are more alive today, after one hundred years, than most of our gabbling contemporaries.

That heaven set hand to it, everyone will agree who remembers that the chief actor in the Manzonian tragi-comedy is God: it is He who touches the heart of the Unnamed and in doing so decides the drama of the betrothed couple; He permits famine, war, and plague to punish human perversity, which always rises up again when the lesson is forgotten. These three scourges have a part, and a great part, in developing the events that are woven around the daughter of Agnese and her affianced.

The moral and mystical substance of the *Promessi Sposi* is fully expressed in that great litany prayer forming part of the Easter liturgy: *Ab ira et odio et omni mala voluntate. . . A spiritu fornicationis . . . A peste, fame et bello, libera nos, Domine.* This is the secret origin of the romance: Don Rodrigo's spirit of fornication, which is the mainspring of the whole action; the repeated condemnation of hatred as a teaching; and plague, famine and war as background and decisive factors. In the list of sources, the Missal comes before the Proclamations.

This tragi-comedy, with a happy ending, can be divided into five acts, arranged as follows:

The first act would be entitled, *Attempts that Failed*. Might (the bravoes), commanded by Lust (Don Rodrigo), win an easy victory over Cowardice (Don Abbondio) and thus the lawful union of the Innocents is prevented. These latter consider how to overcome the obstacle: there is the attempt, which remained only intentional, to have Revenge (Renzo), immediately stifled by Love (Lucia and Padre Cristoforo); the attempt to have recourse to Justice, frustrated by ignoble Interest (the quack notary); the attempt to appeal to Compassion (Padre Cristoforo), rejected by Tyranny (Don Rodrigo); finally, the attempted Ruse (marriage by surprise), suggested by Agnese, which did not come off owing to Don Abbondio's panic. At the same time Force, in the service of Lust, made an attempt to get possession of Lucia, but this also failed. There were thus five attempts and five defeats; no course is left to the Innocents but to take flight.

In the second act, which could be entitled *Arrests,* we find that Lucia has taken refuge in a convent, Renzo is heading for another convent and Padre Cristoforo is banished to the convent of Rimini. At Monza, evil reigns even in the convent refuge: Lust (Gertrude and Egidio) plot the ruin of the Innocent and betray her into the hands of triumphant Might (the Unnamed), won over by defeated Might (Don Rodrigo). In Milan, evil reigns too: there is Famine and Revolt.

Renzo takes part in the tumult, although with the most honest intentions and falls into the hands of Might, lawful indeed, but unjust and stupid. Might has won: the two Innocents are prisoners.

In the third act, *Release,* the solution of the drama approaches. Renzo succeeds in escaping to Venetian territory, but he condemns himself to exile; Lucia is saved by God, who makes use of Holiness (Federigo), in order that Might in the service of Evil be converted to the service of God, but she is obliged to lead a life of bondage in the house of Pedantry (Donna Prassede and Don Ferrante).

In the fourth act, *Scourges,* the action widens: War comes now to chase before it the good and the wicked, persecuted and persecutors and then, last gift from the plundering mercenaries, Plague is rampant, levelling in death the great and the unfortunate, the innocent and the powerful. The personages in the drama are now like atoms whirled about in this dark tornado of misfortune. But the result of the Plague is that Renzo and Padre Cristoforo can return from exile and the power of Holiness (Federigo, Padre Felice, Padre Cristoforo) shines out with increased splendor over the putrid swamp of Evil.

In the fifth and last act, *Espousals,* the Innocents are reunited and a vow is cancelled. We witness the death of the wicked Power (Don Rodrigo) and of the Saint (Padre Cristoforo); the wedding which had been ar-

ranged before the action began is now celebrated and, finally, we see the children of the marriage, the affirmation of Life which continues and asserts itself against all the oppositions of sin and misfortune.

That is the canvas of the vast tragi-comedy imagined by the dramatic genius of the poet of the Adelchi, and it is so vast that to speak of it as a "general judgment in anticipation" is not exaggeration.

Every class of society appears in it: noblemen, priests, friars, monks, lawyers, learned men, captains of armies, governors of cities, artisans, peasants, bailiffs, bravoes, beggars, grave-diggers, soldiers, innkeepers, servants, and merchants.

Every aspect of daily life: the village festival, society dinners, the sermons of religious, processions, weddings, gossipings, alarms.

All forms of evil: assassination, brigandage, pillage, brawls, revolts, war, plague, misery, famine.

All the sentiments of man are described: hatred and love, spite and sacrifice, licentiousness and fidelity, crazy pride and foolish punctilio, the abjection into which a girl who was sacrificed falls; the return of a great sinner to God; the tailor's whole-hearted vanity and the Cardinal's passionate charity, Gervaso's imbecility, the Father Provincial's sharp acumen, the mischief-making of small-minded women, the egoism of the great, compassion for the hungry and sick, the mercenary soldiers' revolting ferocity.

Finally, we are introduced to all those haunts of men where human tragedy and human comedy are played out: the laborer's hut, the literary man's study, the attorney's office, the parish priest's presbytery, the lord's mansion, the exile's castle, the Archbishop's palace, the gentleman's residence, city and country inns, monasteries and churches, the riotous streets of the capital, high roads, deserted forests, the lonely countryside: lastly, more populated and more dreadful than all the other places, the leper's Lazar-house.

Set out in too few and in too simple words, such are the contents of the late Professor Borgognoni's "novel": it is a novel which, like every masterpiece, from the *Odyssey* to the *Légende des Siècles,* is a dramatic vision of human life, of all life, of all the greatness, the ignominy, the passions of man: man, who is struggling with God for centuries as Jacob wrestled with Him for one night.

If we reduce the work of the Milanese writer to its mere outline, two young people who want to be married and who do marry ultimately in spite of various obstacles, we have even less than a novel: it is only a sentimental sketch, a village idyll. But the proof of genius is to see a whole landscape in a crumb of bread, the ocean in one salt drop, greatness in the least things. A journey to the Kingdom of the Dead is an episode in Homer and Virgil; it is a rude legend used by preachers in clerical compilations; but with

Dante it becomes the epopee of Christianity, the cathedral poem of the Middle Ages, the triple Kingdom wherein coexist, with equal right and explicitness, the laborer hedging up a gap "with a little forkful of thorns," [1] St Thomas with his syllogisms, and the ineffable Trinity bending over the "marvellous swirl." [2]

If the *Promessi Sposi* is nothing but an idyll in the form of a novel, why then, O custodians of the Roll of Fame, have you disturbed Cervantes, Walter Scott, and all the other powers in literature to trace the plagiarisms and the reminiscences of Don Alessandro ? Now, I will tell you the real source from which Manzoni took his book, and I believe no one has discovered it up to the present. It is the *Jeu de Robin et de Marion,* by Adam de la Halle, usually known as *Le Bossu d'Arras,* born 1235 and died 1288. Read this hunch-back's *Jeu* in Coussemaker's edition, or in Rambeau's, or in that of Langlois: it is the same story throughout. Marion, a beautiful country maiden, is betrothed to Robin. A noble knight desires her and deceives her, doing all he can to carry her off. He does what Don Rodrigo only thinks of doing: sends his retainers to beat his plebeian rival. But Marion remains faithful to her Robin and they get married in the end with much rejoicing. This *Jeu,* as a new

Translator's Note: (1) and (2) are quotations from Dante. See Purg. IV, 19, and Par. XXX, 68, for their full application.

revealer of comparisons would affirm, was not unknown in Italy: indeed it was so well known that it was played the first time in Naples at the court of Charles d'Anjou, in 1283 ![1]

A ridiculous comparison, you will say? I agree. But it is not more ridiculous than the comparisons set out with such learned complaisance, between the library of Don Quixote and the library of Don Ferrante; or than those still more appropriate parallels detailed between Diderot's *Religieuse* and the *Vie de Marianne* by Marivaux; not to mention Signor Marino Fiorini, who imagines he has discovered Manzoni's images and thoughts by the dozen in the works of a certain Cattaneo, a preacher of the seventeenth century: as we say in Florence, that is the chapel-of-ease giving alms to the Cathedral. Taking them all in all, these comparisons have about the same value as a criticism of the title *Promessi Sposi,* made by a certain gabbler, who asserted that the title itself is a clumsy redundancy, because "Sposi" is derived from the verb *spondere,* to promise, and therefore it *means* "promised" !

There is one true origin of the *Promessi Sposi,* the only one, and that is the soul of Alessandro Manzoni. Every great book has two faces: humanity and a man.

[1] I do not believe Manzoni was acquainted with Adam de la Halle's *Jeu,* but he could have read it before publishing the *Promessi Sposi,* because it was printed in Paris by Didot, 1822 (Société des Bibliophiles Français).

It is the valley of Jehoshaphat and an autobiography. It is the macrocosm and the microcosm: all the life of men and the direct, or interposed, reflection of the writer's life.

Therefore the *Promessi Sposi,* in addition to being a tragi-comedy, is also an autobiography: Manzoni depicts himself in his book, through the different personages. It does not matter that the characters have natures totally opposed: the plurality of souls in one single mind is a commonplace in psychology this long time past. First of all, there is in every man a multitude of ancestors who come to life from time to time in the action of their descendant; then there is man as he is every day, changing with the different phases of age; then man as he would *wish* to be; and man as he *believes* he is; and the same man as he *appears* to others; not to speak of the everlasting strife between the corporal *ego* with bestial desires, and the spiritual *ego* with an angel's nostalgia.

All these different Alessandros existed in Manzoni too and perhaps strove for mastery: a calm and steady exterior life sometimes hides the greatest number of interior, conflicting personalities. But the most lively creatures of romance were born from these diverse personalities, existing beneath the unity of the man-poet. Manzoni divided himself up, dismembered himself. In the cavern of the subconscious, the analysis of art did for him what Seth did to Osiris, or the

Titans to Dionysus; or what the prism does to a ray of sunlight. His book is a mirror of himself, but one must fit together the scattered pieces in order to get back the whole image.

In Don Rodrigo, Manzoni's stern and arrogant forefathers come to life again, of whom no very pleasant memory survived, even in dialect verse; and perhaps something of himself too as a young man, when he lived at Caleotto, before experience and faith had sobered him.

In Renzo, Manzoni's precocious Jacobin adolescence lives again; his sympathy for bold and spirited poetic witticisms, but especially his ancient and life-long passion for justice. Renzo, in his honest simplicity, has a fixed belief in justice; in Manzoni himself, this belief was not really fixed, because the irony of observation and his knowledge of history left him no illusions on the score, but it was a most powerful desire, a will, an ideal.

In Don Ferrante, we meet the Manzoni who is a home-loving reader of books, a man of studies, who wants to meddle not at all in the material annoyances of practical affairs and who keeps as sheltered as he can from domestic upheavals. That sophistical subtlety of Don Ferrante's was a characteristic of Manzoni too, glimpsed now and again in some polemical pages, emphatic and easily syllogistic. Don Ferrante was lacking in science and his premises were false,

but his method was not to be despised; and the modern author looked with affectionate and almost fraternal sympathy upon this elderly man of learning.

The two priests who stand, one at either extremity of the action of the *Promessi Sposi,* Don Abbondio and Federigo Borromeo, represent the two "potentialities" (in the peripatetic sense) of the Manzonian soul: a prudence which, pushed a little further, would be the curate's pusillanimity: a Christian love for the afflicted and for justice which, if sublimated in activity, could have lifted Manzoni even to the level of the Archbishop's heroism. To put it crudely, and therefore in an exaggerated way, one might say that there was in Manzoni a Don Abbondio who could have aspired (allowing for the difference of the real character) to become a Federigo. It is said that Manzoni's model for Don Abbondio was a curate of Germanedo: it may be so. But for only half the character; for the other half, he could make use of something that was at the bottom of his own nature: a circumspect timidity, always repressed and mastered yet which, since it had to be overcome, was present, or at any rate potential. On the other hand, the most eloquent pages of the *Morale Cattolica* show that Manzoni had the abilities of a great apostle, and that the discourses he placed in the cardinal's mouth, in the famous colloquies, were not mere literary ostentation, but the sincere expression of a naturally Christian heart.

In the two chief converts of the romance, Padre Cristoforo and the Unnamed, all readers see more or less an adumbration of Manzoni's own conversion. These two had been assassins in different degrees. Manzoni's sins, even in the period of youthful vainglory, were more especially sins of an intellectual kind. But the subtle examiner of himself and of others knew too well that the sins of the mind are not less deadly, but often more so, than grosser sins. He knew the Gospel too well not to remember that Christ placed the desire for another's death, a mere curse, on the same level as homicide. Therefore, to a true Christian, there are no innocent people: one alone, among human creatures, was born immaculate. Some dregs of ferocity and cupidity are in all of us, even in the most perfect. There is a murderer in every man: honest men do not allow the act to follow the desire; saints, by mortification and self-chastisement, force themselves to love those whom they tend to hate. Victory over the ferocious instincts which we share in common gives the grading of our humanity: when the victory is won through fear of punishment, it is mediocrity; when it is won through the hope of invisible good, it is virtue; when it is won through sheer love, it is sanctity. But if you consider the matter, victory presupposes an enemy present: conquered indeed, but strong nevertheless, since other force had been necessary to overcome it, and so even the pious, the gentle,

the virtuous Manzoni must have experienced within himself the ancient hereditary strength of evil, all the more acutely because he was spiritually so noble and well-informed.

Art, like confession, is purgative. Genius gives vent to savage impulses in fantastic creations and thus gets rid of the internal burdens of sin: and perhaps certain marvellous books were ransoms for sins that were never committed.

Since that illusionist of Morra Irpina has been put back on the placards of the critical theatre, through the merit or the fault of a methodical Diadoco, the chart-makers of poetry have been making a great display of "worlds." The moment they succeed in putting an author on the pedestal, behold them parading before him the ranks of their pretended "world" and to the first "world" others come to supersede it or mingle with it, contrary or similar, so that in the end one can find more "worlds" throwing the ball from page to page than the mad brain of Anton Francesco Doni ever imagined. Atlas carried only one on his shoulders: they travel with their saddle-bags crammed with them, and yet it is marvellous how they can despatch them.

It would have been too great a miracle if Manzoni had escaped from the hands of those demiurges of verbal "Worlds." He too fell in with them, alas; or, rather, they trapped him and he got away from them,

only to get caught in the nets of the "Eleusinian critics," who, as everyone knows, have sworn on the tables of Sinai to renounce the sight of their eyes, rather than humiliate themselves so far as to state a simple truth in simple words, or to make an ordinary remark in ordinary speech.

But there is nothing to be done in the matter: demiurges and Eleusinians hold the field with their mock tournaments. There is no room for good plain criticism of the old school, honest and modest, adhering humbly to the greatness of art, such criticism as was turned out for instance by a man of the trade, who was also an artist: Giosue Carducci. When will that so necessary notice be hung up on the door of the enclosure of Art: *No admission except to the workmen?*

This digression, although it is most sincere, aims at providing myself with a defence for other things which I want to say about the *Promessi Sposi.* I do not want to seem cabalistic: I love lucidity; depth is clear, whereas shallow pools are turbid.

Therefore, let us leave the "worlds" and turn in simplicity to the constituent elements of the great autobiographical tragi-comedy. Reading the *Promessi Sposi* again, I noticed that certain fundamental themes occur and recur in the book, developed each time with new variations as in a first-rate symphony, and that these themes — I counted seven — are *always re-*

peated five times. If the number Three reigns in the *Divina Commedia,* the number Five dominates in the *Promessi Sposi.*

The first theme is that of *Threat:* it immediately opens the action. The bravoes threaten Don Abbondio; Renzo threatens Don Rodrigo; Padre Cristoforo threatens Don Rodrigo ("a day will come . . ."); the bravoes threaten the village constable; the Prince father threatens the unwilling Gertrude.

The second theme is *Vocation:* an argument on which Manzoni likes to dwell. He tells us in more or less detail why Don Abbondio became a priest; why Lodovico became a friar; why Gertrude became a nun; why Federigo entered Holy Orders, and finally why poor Lucia made a vow to Our Lady, this being not exactly a vocation, but near enough to it, because the other cases too are substantially "vows," among them being that of chastity.

The third theme is *Nights,* and there are five nights of anguish in the romance: Don Abbondio's night of panic; Renzo's night of fear in the forest; Lucia's night of despair as a prisoner; the Unnamed's night of mental stress; Don Rodrigo's night of terror when plague-stricken; all these are decisive periods in the action of the story.

Flight is the fourth theme: the betrothed couple's flight on the evening they were to have been married; the bravoes' flight when they fail in their attempt at

kidnapping; Renzo's flight as far as the Adda after his adventures in Milan; Don Rodrigo's flight from the palace after the Unnamed's conversion; Don Abbondio's flight with the women when the soldiers are approaching.

Parallel to this is the theme of *Deliverance,* which also recurs five times: Lodovico is saved by the crowd after his fatal quarrel; the Superintendent of Provisions is saved by Ferrer; the doctor Settala is saved by the carriers; Renzo finds deliverance on the grave-diggers' cart; Lucia is saved by God in the Unnamed's castle.

The sixth theme, *Conversion,* has a very important bearing on the others. The observant reader will notice five conversions also (or repentances, or penances): the conversion of Lodovico, who becomes Padre Cristoforo; the conversion of the Nun of Monza (referred to in a few words in Chapter XXXVII, but more developed later); the Unnamed's conversion; Don Abbondio's conversion (after his interview with the Cardinal: "I will not fail . . .', replied Don Abbondio, in a voice which at that moment came truly from his heart"; his conversion is the most imperfect of all, barely a beginning and it will develop only after the death of Don Rodrigo, but still it counts); and finally Renzo's change of heart, that complete renunciation of hatred to which he attained in the Lazar-house, after the friar's words, as he looked upon Don Rodrigo, delirious and dying.

Lastly, the seventh theme, bound to the preceding one, as the themes of *Flight* and *Deliverance* are bound together: the theme of *Pardon,* which, with that of *Conversion,* is one of the basic pivots of the romance. The scenes of pardon are among the most touching and pathetic in the book: the pardon which Padre Cristoforo asked for and was granted in the house of that lord he had slain; the pardon not asked but immediately granted by the Cardinal to the Unnamed; the pardon which the Unnamed begs from Lucia; Renzo's pardon of Don Rodrigo, which came from his heart in the end; lastly and rather burlesque, as suited the type, Don Abbondio's pardon of Renzo.

There are two other requests for pardon, which are more sublime than the five we have named: two innocent persons, two who have given no offence, two saints, ask to be pardoned: Federigo, who asks pardon of Don Abbondio; Padre Felice, who asks pardon of the sick in the Lazar-house. But in these two cases there is no question of an offence, but the contrary, and therefore one cannot rightly speak of these incidents as pardons. As a matter of fact, Don Abbondio replies to the request by saying, "Why do you make fun of me ?" and the crowd who had been cured reply with tears and sobs.

One could perhaps find other recurrent themes, but these seven (each one of the seven repeated five

times) are not irrelevant topics: they nearly all represent absolutely vital points in the drama. It opens with *Threats,* continues with *Flights,* is resolved in the *Night* of the *Vow* and of the *Conversion,* and ends with the doctrine of *Pardon* ("to forgive always!"), the substance and argument of the whole work.

Is all this simply my imagination? Is it an arithmetical recurrence of which Manzoni really took no heed? A mere coincidence? I really would not care to be insistent: but the story of Dante hermeneutics shows that if Pythagorism is not the principle of rational order in the universe, it may well be so in Art. Even if we give up the mystery of the numerical regularity in presenting the "themes," one cannot deny that these and none others are the motives around which the story develops and the plot is resolved, and it is sufficient to enumerate them in order to recognize once more Manzoni's innovation.

This indeed does not consist in the fact, as is usually affirmed, that he admitted the humble to the honors of art: the old novelists too brought plebeians and *bourgeois* on the scene, and it is opportune to recall that many of the principal parts in the romance are entrusted to noblemen and to personages of high dignity: the Cardinal, the Unnamed, Don Rodrigo, Count Attilio, the Count uncle, Gertrude's Prince Father, Donna Prassede, Don Ferrante and so on. In my

view, Manzoni's originality, compared with modern story-tellers, consists rather in two much more important factors: that he substituted *evangelical* themes for the pagan and fantastic themes of nearly all the romances in the world; and that, unlike modern writers, he depicted life which is progressive and self-assertive rather than life which is decadent.

On the whole the usual themes of Romance are the same as those of chivalrous poetry: Love (an idyll or passion, frequently in the form of seduction, adultery, incest); Might (the struggle for dominion, or for a woman; a struggle which is often depicted by a duel in modern romance); Hatred (with all its obstacles, rivalries, deceits and vengeances), suicide, and treason. Manzoni gives hardly any place to Love: he speaks with reserve of Lucia's chaste love and merely touches on Don Rodrigo's whim and on Gertrude's fall. The love which Manzoni emphasizes again and again is a very different kind of love: Renzo's and Lodovico's love of justice; the Unnamed's love of peace; the love of men shown by Padre Cristoforo, Federigo, Padre Felice; Don Ferrante's love of study; and, surpassing all, that perfect and divine love which is manifested in Pardon.

Let us consider another characteristic of modern romance: there is always an odor of failure in the most famous examples. A person, a family, a group of characters, decay, fall into ruin, are broken up. The

greater part of Balzac's romances are stories of failure. Take a typical English romance, the *Mayor of Casterbridge,* by Thomas Hardy: there is in it the melancholy of degradation, of dissolution; it is the story of an end. Think of the most famous and representative of French romances: *Madame Bovary.* You have the same thing there: a picture of spoiled, wasted, finished lives. Read Dostoievsky's *Obsessed* and observe how the heroes of the romance break up little by little, spiritually and bodily. Every modern romance is a hospital with a cemetery annexed to it. Life droops, becomes extenuated, corrupts, rots. Even Verga's happiest romances tell only of lives in dissolution: the *Malavoglia, Mastro Don Gesualdo.* The whole series should be entitled, *The Defeated.*

In the *Promessi Sposi,* on the contrary, you meet with men who triumph. Those who appear to be the weakest end in victory: they are dispersed and disbanded by aggressive powers, which succeed in separating them, but not in overcoming them. Lucia's tears disturb Nibbio and move the Unnamed; the words of Federigo and Padre Cristoforo excite repentance and prevail against violence. Love conquers: the love of the betrothed for each other, the love of men, the love of God. The family that should have been founded is seen founded in the end, with its crown of children; life ascends, resists, asserts itself, in defiance of sin and death.

These are really the differences that make the *Promessi Sposi* (still considered outside Italy a happy imitation of Walter Scott) one of the most original and powerful romances in the whole of literature. And this brings us to the point of departure for another enquiry: what are the reasons for the scant popularity of the Manzonian romance in other countries? Is it because of its very uniqueness? Or of the radically Italian qualities of language, creation, soul, and the whole moral atmosphere in which the personages move? Or is it fear that a Catholic romance hides a thesis, a snare, an apologia, from which Art may suffer? Since Goethe, no foreigner of great note has spoken in fitting terms of the *Promessi Sposi,* and I found one of the most harsh and most unjust judgments of it in a Catholic writer (true, he is a French Catholic), Barbey d'Aurevilly. In an article of the 16th June 1873, shortly after Manzoni's death, D'Aurevilly actually wrote as follows:

> *Manzoni, l'auteur du* Comte de Carmagnole, *une pièce du niveau des tragédies de Baour-Lormian et de Carrion-Nisas, Manzoni, l'auteur des* Sposi Promessi, *une imitation si pénible de Walter Scott qu'il en avait gardé une courbature, achevait de vivre depuis trente ans dans sa courbature et dans une obscurité meritée. . .*

I am very sorry, because Barbey d'Aurevilly was a Catholic and a writer of much talent, whom I have often admired, but it would be difficult to commit in

so few words more stupid blunders of fact and judgment. Saint-Beuve spoke differently of the book, and even Zola deigned to admire (thought it was the only point) the frenzied fugitive on horseback. But the fact remains that in France and in many other countries, not to say in all, the *Promessi Sposi* is read little and understood still less.

In the case of France, the chief reason for this neglect cannot be traced to the literary arrogance of that nation, which since 600 has awarded itself the primacy in every form of art; it must be sought rather in that measure of French spirit which Manzoni possessed, partly derived from his Celtic origin and partly from his great familiarity with French writers. A proud nation like France is willing to give a warm welcome to foreign books, provided their contents and flavor are exotic and remote; in a word, when they are a novelty, a revelation. Manzoni's penetration, alertness, and lucidity may perhaps have seemed French qualities to the French, nor could they please as in Italy, where they are much rarer gifts.

But up to the present neither the French nor other foreigners have been able to discover and savor what is so profoundly Italian and yet so universal in Manzoni's work. Even we, I speak at least for myself, have taken some time to perceive it. This also is a sign, did we need it, of authentic and enduring greatness.

ALESSANDRO MANZONI

MANZONI THE REBEL

THERE were two reasons particularly that made me dislike the *Promessi Sposi* when I was a boy: the duty of having to read the book at school, as a lesson, in that odious framing of grammatical and logical analysis; and Carducci's famous opinion of the book.

Even today when that dislike has changed into the warmest enthusiasm, I hold and maintain that the *Promessi Sposi* is not a book to be set for study in schools, except in universities, where one can, or could, go somewhat beyond the mere text.

One can begin to savor "Milanese History of the Seventeenth Century" round the age of thirty, or better still after forty. When the boy, alas, has become a man and can make a better judgment of his amiable brethren, the race of men, among whom he must necessarily live; when he knows himself better and the polytheistic and sinful nature that is in all of us; when he has attained with an effort — the more easily he can read others, the more difficult this effort is — to that disenchanted indulgence which many mistake for natural gentleness and which implies (not always, but too often) a residue of skepticism and a confession of weakness. Manzoni grew old quickly in the things of the spirit and his lucid judgment, his humility as a potential sinner, invested him with that atmosphere of cordial serenity and subdued harmony, and gave him that perspicacity which

would be even malicious were his eyes not always veiled with tears; that sum of qualities, in a word, which is called the Manzonian spirit of genius, and which is hidden, or obscure, if not repugnant to youth, which tends to abandonment, impetus, self-assertion.

The same is true as regards style. Manzoni's art is such that it cannot be rightly appraised until one has first taken in one's teeth the bit of metaphorical rhetoric; until one has fallen in love with all forms of Italian prose (there are more than is imagined), and grown tired of each in turn; until one has returned in one's steps little by little, with frequent temptations and lapses, but in the end giving up brandy for wine, and then wine for pure water, adapting one's palate again to domestic flavors and one's hand to chaste modelling. Without this preliminary experience, one can hardly discern the judicious mastery, the lofty delicacy, the restful intimacy and last of all the homely perfection of the prose of the *Promessi Sposi.*

But if an artist devotes himself exclusively to the task, he can acquire this experienced and well-informed judgment between the ages of thirty and forty: young men always look for gold, even if it is only artificial, and for jewels, even if they are only faked, and not until later life can they be satisfied with Dante's granite, or Manzoni's dark silver, solid and twenty carat.

Carducci's judgment to which I refer is that famous

one of 1873, later reprinted in his volume *Bozzetti e Scherme:*

> As regards the *Promessi Sposi,* is not this the moral most clearly and most easily drawn from it ? That if a man takes part in a revolt, he runs the risk of being hanged; and that it would be better for him to mind his own business in peace, doing whatever little good he can, according to the guidance, the counsels, and the examples of men of God.[1]

In those days I was a Carduccian, a rebel, and an ignoramus: in a word, I was young. And imagine me swallowing a book, which the man who was my literary Chiron had christened a manual for the resigned ! At that age, resignation can hardly be distinguished from cowardice; and obedience to men of God means the servility of timorous and rather crafty people. Therefore, as soon as I escaped from school, I gave up reading, or read badly, the *Promessi Sposi.* I needed the maturity of age, the example of friends, a surfeit of international fare, and confused remorse, before I took that great book in hand again, with a changed soul, overcoming my former distaste for "That branch of the lake of Como, which extends . . ." and all the rest of it. However, I made peace again with Manzoni the artist, although the man himself still suited me little or not at all. That gentlemanly *bonhomie* and Jansenist humility of his seemed to conceal a coldness not far removed from skepticism. All of which merely means

[1] *Opere,* Bologna, Zanichelli, III, 182.

that I kept young longer than the notes of my personal chronology would indicate. It was only the other day Count Luciano von Inghenheim (whose fine German name is much too hidden under his pseudonym of Luciano Zuccoli) loftily accused me, from the height of his own baldness, of being still hopelessly young.

Well then, what explains the fact that today I accept not only Manzoni's art, but also his spirit ? Is it perhaps because I have returned to Christianity, as Henrietta Blondel's husband returned in his day ? I do not think so; my conversion to Manzoni preceded that other and much more difficult conversion; besides, everyone knows, and many deplore, that among Christian writers I look more to St Peter Damian and to Veuillot than to the mild Manzoni.

Anyhow, would it not be more to the point to consider making an appeal against Carducci's sentence ? Is it really true, as that combatant Enotrio asserted, that no other juice can be extracted from the *Promessi Sposi* but resignation to a cowering kind of life ?

I do not think so: at the very utmost, that might be the conclusion drawn from Don Abbondio, whom Manzoni in his heart does not dislike; but certainly this personage in the romance cannot be raised to the position of the Chorus in Greek tragedy. On the other hand, there is a conclusion on the last page of the book, which Manzoni repeats as if it were his own, putting it into the mouth of the betrothed, and it should be con-

sidered along with Carducci's: ". . . that misfortune comes . . . often through our own fault; but that the greatest caution and innocence do not suffice to ward it off: and that when it comes, whether through our own fault or not, faith in God sweetens it and turns it to account for a better life."

Here it is a question of "misfortune," that is, of woes in general which come upon us through our own fault, or the fault of others; but nothing is said about what a man must do, even a Christian, when this misfortune is called persecution or injustice. Must he bow his head in silence, or may he defend himself ? And if the defence — to which alas we are forced by our misery — is aggravated by the contingency of facts until it takes the shape of rebellion (which may be strict justice when it is rebellion against injustice), must we forthwith condemn the rebel ?

Manzoni does not set out the problem in these precise terms in his book: the two saints, who best represent the grandeur and beauty of religious life, Padre Cristoforo and Federigo Borromeo, faithful to the spirit of the Gospel and to all Christian tradition, speak of "forgiveness." But if such forgiveness is an ideal return of love for hatred, it cannot be extended to acquiescence in the injustice of others, because that would be downright complicity in evil.

Don Rodrigo represents the tyranny of sensuality that has changed to pique: even apart from the claims of

legitimate love, should poor Renzo have meekly given in to the despot and quitted the country in resignation, so that his betrothed could fall without difficulty into the persecutor's hands ?

Renzo rebels. He rebels violently at first and Padre Cristoforo and Lucia restrain him with great difficulty and they do well. But his rebellion takes its course in other ways. Poor Renzo tries to protect himself and to triumph by various plans: first by having recourse to justice, which fails him through the baseness of a quack notary; then by a secret marriage which does not come off owing to Don Abbondio's terror.

Renzo's rebellions do not end here: a fugitive to Milan, he mingles with the rioters and preaches rebellion against injustice both in the square and in the inn; he rebels against the written and printed law, refusing to reveal his name and surname; arrested, he resists the bailiffs and escapes from them. Later on, during the plague, when he is followed, he rounds on his pursuers with a knife in his hand, "and with a more threatening and snarling countenance than he had ever shown in all his days."

Renzo, in a word, is a typical plain man of the people of the good old style: a man who has a mind to work, who is thinking of setting up house and who looks out for a good wife, who is gentle with her, with his own people, and with his friends; a good lad, with a heart of gold, who would not harm a fly; but if anyone offends

him, if anyone walks over him, or tries to crush him, he does not soar to Christian heroism, he does not offer the other cheek, but he clenches his fist to defend himself and perhaps to hurt someone. And if there is a riot in the streets against the Government, he rushes into it too, impelled partly by his confused but innate love of justice, and partly by his wish to lend a hand, in the hope — very often vain — of making the affairs of this world progress a little better.

Manzoni did not dislike Renzo in the least: one could affirm the contrary. One feels that the author likes this young man, even with the faults we have mentioned; because he knows that Renzo is good at heart and that, when all is said, the poor fellow is a much better Christian than many who wear out their knees at the confessional, but who yet have not his generous impulses, nor his compassion for the poor, nor his chaste fidelity to the woman he loves.

Another rebel, and it is needless to stress it, is the very person who twice counsels Renzo to forgive, or rather orders him to do so, in noble and touching words: Padre Cristoforo in fact. When this man was in the world, he had lent his strength to serve the victims of strength; when he was touched by Grace, and had consecrated himself to God and to St Francis, he refused his nature only the inheritance of sin and continued his work as defender of the persecuted. Formerly he used to go about in arms, now he is unarmed, but he still

devotes everything within his power to the same end: his burning words, his connections, money. He too, like Renzo, and in defence of Renzo, rebels openly against Don Rodrigo. He boldly presents himself before the tyrant in his castle, and when he perceives that the ignominious nobleman answers his discourses with derision, he does not hesitate, he, the friar, he, the Franciscan, he, the Christian, to fling out one of those curses which, in the mouth of a religious, must sound like an offence against charity to our modern little Christians, who seem to prefer reading Canon Schmid's novels or Count Tolstoi's, rather than the Psalms or the Prophets. "I pity this house; a curse is hanging over it. Wait and see whether the justice of God can be resisted by four walls, and four cut-throats at your gate . . . and as for you, listen what I predict to you. A day will come. . ." And the threat is interrupted by Don Rodrigo seizing his arm, not by any sudden repentance on the part of Padre Cristoforo. Yet the friar in this case takes the place of none other than God and he is certain that he is cursing the evil castle in the name of God; and on the part of God, he promises the scoundrel a punishment which he is not given time to determine, but which one guesses to be terrible. With all due respect to Carducci, is this the book which teaches "that it is better to mind one's own business in peace," without getting mixed up with rebellion ?

Notice that Padre Cristoforo is one of the characters

in the romance most loved by the author. This is the Manzoni who is passed off, by the enemies of Christianity and by Christians who see only one side of Christ, as the preacher of a doctrine of utter resignation, a type of Catholic who would never allow himself to be carried away by indignation, but reduces his opposition to a sugary sweetness, with perhaps a pinch of the vanilla of irony. They forget that Christ has indeed commanded us to love them that hate us, that hate *us,* but that does not mean those who hate our neighbor, or truth, or God. Towards such, we may use mildness, but if gentleness does not prevail, we have the right, as Christians, to give free rein to our disdain, to condemnation and if necessary even to invective and violence. Christ Himself burst out into a tremendous attack against the Scribes and Pharisees, and used the whip on buyers and sellers in the Temple, so giving us an example which should not be forgotten.

Rebellion against injustice should not be carried out in such a way that evil is added to evil. Man, in his innate weakness, is here too often prone to error, but it is the strict duty of Christians to guard against such error, especially of Christians who have devoted themselves, or who have been consecrated, to follow out the work entrusted by Christ to the Apostles.

We have another example of conduct in the *Promessi Sposi,* in that character, who even more than Padre

Cristoforo, represents the perfection of Christian life in Manzoni's eyes — Cardinal Borromeo. There are two long colloquies in the romance, wherein Federigo speaks as his great, noble heart dictates: that very famous colloquy with the Unnamed and the other, less celebrated, with Don Abbondio. I may be wrong, but I have always liked the second one better, and even to the present day, having read it countless times, I cannot help being impressed and touched when I go back to it. I confess that these are the only pages in the whole book that brought tears to my eyes, especially at the end. The dialogue with the Unnamed is very fine too, but in that, by the very nature of the event — a giant in evil touched by the Grace of God — Federigo tends somewhat to sacred oratory: in some of his sentences there is just a shade of emphasis.

But in the dialogue with the poor curate, the Cardinal's language is always lofty, as befits his dignity and the things he says, yes it has a poignancy, a sweetness, a ring of humility truly heroic in its sheer simplicity, touching the heart by that power which is to be sensed only in innocence accusing itself, in greatness humbling itself.

And, after all, in this marvellous colloquy, what is the chief point in the Cardinal's rebuke ? That Don Abbondio had submitted to Don Rodrigo's despotism, that he had not disobeyed injustice, that he had not sought for some means to do his duty in defiance of

threats, that he had not stood up in the defence of two unfortunate people, that he did not have recourse to righteous strength, capable of overwhelming the pretences of evil strength, that he had been so cowed and submissive: in a word, because he did not do what Padre Cristoforo did.

> I might say to you, why therefore did you bind yourself to a ministry which obliges you to make war continually against the passions of the world? . . . Look now yourself, what you have done. You have obeyed iniquity, and paid no heed to what duty commanded you to do. . . Yet you should have known that iniquity may indeed threaten and deal blows, but it cannot give orders. . . Surely you know that iniquity is founded not only on its own strength, but also on the credulity and fears of others? . . . The world detests to succor the oppressed, or to take any part in the struggle of afflicted people, such is the world: but what about us?

It is not necessary to continue: everyone can read again for himself Federigo's generous and lofty words. In brief, they say this: Don Abbondio should have accepted war, refused obedience, married the young couple, rebelled against tyrannical power at the cost of no matter what danger; he should have had recourse to his real ally, the bishop, opposing authority against authority, strength against strength, power against power. Therefore neither does the Cardinal teach the theory which is the whole essence of the book, according to Carducci; he does not recommend everyone to

mind his own business in peace and quietness; indeed it is just this cowardly doctrine that he reproves and contradicts as unworthy of Christians and especially of those invested with the heritage of the Apostles.

In his love for the oppressed, Manzoni even goes so far as to justify and almost to praise private violence as a necessary substitute for justice, in cases where civil power is absent and religious power seems inadequate. Relating what the life of the Unnamed was like before that famous night, he points out almost approvingly that his arrogance was not always used in the service of evil:

> It sometimes happened that weak people, who were harassed, and tyrannized over by some powerful lord, turned to him for protection; he would then take the part of the oppressed, and force the oppressor to abstain from further injuries, to repair the wrongs he had committed and even to stoop to apologies; or, in case the tyrant proved stubborn, he would completely crush his power, constrain him to quit the place where he had wielded such unjust influence, or even make him pay a more expeditious and more terrible penalty. In these cases, his name, usually so dreaded and abhorred, became for a time an object of blessing: for (I will not say this justice, but) this remedy, this recompense of some sort, could not have been expected, under the circumstances of the times, from any other either public or private source.

Violence, therefore, when it is used to defend the weak, is a "remedy," a "compensation" and worthy of bless-

ings, even when it is employed by a man who is the very antithesis of justice and Christianity on so many other counts.

Take another example: Manzoni does not approve of the tumults in Milan, not so much because every revolt is unlawful, but for this reason, inspired more by political economy than by the Gospel: that pillaging the bakeries is not the best way to have more bread in a period of scarcity. But the reader who peruses attentively those chapters in which Manzoni explains the origins of the disturbance will perceive that the fault, almost the whole fault according to him, lay with the rulers, the powerful, lords and learned men; and all this analysis of causes seems set out on purpose to justify, and I would almost say, to approve, the furious outbreak of the lower orders. The work of interested instigators plays a part too in this revolt, as Manzoni is anxious to explain, for the greater justification of the rebels:

> Among so many who were excited, there were some few of cooler temperament, who stood quietly watching the troubling of the water with great satisfaction, who busied themselves in troubling it more and more, by such reasonings and stories as rogues know how to invent, and agitated minds are so ready to believe, and who determined not to let it calm down without first catching a little fish.

Gross errors on the part of magistrates and instigation on the part of evil-doers: these, therefore, according to

Manzoni, are factors which excuse the excesses of the Milanese populace.

The reader who seeks diligently will meet with other minor rebels in the romance: Agnese, who agrees with Renzo in wanting to have the marriage celebrated in defiance of Don Rodrigo; Perpetua, who advises her master to seek the Archbishop's assistance ("he glories in upholding a poor curate against these tyrants, when he has an opportunity"), and she reproaches him for his cowardice. ("And I have always noticed that whoever knows how to show his teeth and make use of them, is treated with respect.") Even poor Gertrude tries to rebel against her father's unjust coercion: her rebellion does not succeed because of her weakness and her imprudent letter to the page, but Manzoni is careful not to blame her action in those pages where he frankly and emphatically denounces the prince's deceptions, selfishness, and plots to the injury of the daughter he sacrificed. If this rebellion had succeeded, Manzoni seems to say, it would have saved Gertrude from a detestable imprisonment in a cloister and the horrible chain of sins which followed from that.

Therefore, it is false to say that the romance recommends and represents only that resignation at any price which sometimes cloaks, under the beautiful name of Christianity, the cowardly egoism of people who want to avoid trouble at all cost. Certainly these are less dangerous than people who are always looking for

trouble; but in cases where trouble comes upon us, and perhaps pleads for our charity, to succor the poor and the weak, or boldly to defend truth and faith, one may lawfully hope that the divine Scourger will forgive the means employed in consideration of the intention.

We are too used to seeing Manzoni as he was in his latter years: in those portraits representing him as an elderly man, stooping and wrinkled, with a small, pallid face, in which the diffident sweetness is barely tempered by the ironical fold of the mouth. We imagine that this little old gentleman, so neat and genteel, retiring and modest, could never have preached and practised anything but mildness, good form in speech and manners, humble contentment, and a reasoning acumen so subtle as to be almost trustful indulgence and very nearly skeptical indecision.

But those who know the whole Manzoni know another Manzoni, very different from this man proposed to us as the more perfect and indeed the only Manzoni. On the contrary, there were at least two distinct Manzonis: the son and the grandfather. However you look at it, it is impossible that the mature man and the old man did not retain some traits of the adolescent and of the young man. As characters and artists, both those Manzonis are admirable, but if Faith regained makes the second phase of his life seem greater, we must not forget that his conversion took place in 1810, that is

when he was barely twenty-five: in the full tide of his youth.

There is no lack of information concerning Manzoni, the young man, among which are his first poetical efforts. It is unnecessary to recall his escapade at school, when he was the first to cut his hair in a pigtail to show his Jacobin sympathies; nor must one omit reference in his *Trionfo della Libertà,* into which his youthful fury and admiration for Dante made him put verses which would horrify those who imagine a Manzoni always composed and moderate, incapable of any verbal violence or grossness:

E nel roman bordello prostituta,
vile, superba, sozza e scellerata
al maggior offerente era venduta.
Ivi un postribol fece, ove sfacciata
facea di sè mercato. . .

[And in the Roman brothel, the prostitute, mean, bold, foul and debased, had sold herself to the highest bidder. Here she had her house of ill fame, where brazenly she offered herself for sale. . .]

Does not that convince you ? Here then is a little invocation which vibrates with tenderness:

Deh ! vomiti l'accesa Etna l'ultrice
fiamma, che la città fetente copra
e la penètri fino alla radice. . .

[Come, Raging Etna, vomit out thy last flames to smother the putrid city and burn it to its foundations. . .]

And one must not omit this little piece on "Impious Tyranny":

È disperata mora, e ai suoi singulti
non sia che cor s'intenerisca e pieghi,
e agli strazi perdoni ed agli insulti,
o dal Ciel pace a l'empia spoglia preghi;
ma l'universo al suo morir tripudi,
e poca polve a l'ossa infami neghi.
È l'alma dentro alle negre paludi
piombi, e sien rabbia, assenzio e fel sua dape,
e tutto Inferno a tormentarla sudi,
se pur tanta nequizia entro vi cape.

[At that despairing death and at those sobs, no heart but would not melt and yield, pardoning the anguish and the offence, to pray for peace from Heaven on that unholy dead. But at that death the universe exults, denying even a little dust to the infamous corpse. And the soul into the black pit drops. May wrath, bitterness and hatred be its portion, and all Hell join in sweating to torment it — if indeed such iniquity could enter even there.]

You will object that these verses were written at the age of fifteen. True. But when Manzoni read them over again in later life, he added a note in the margin, discarding them, "but," he said, "seeing no untruth, nor base praise, nor anything unworthy of me, I recognize the sentiments as mine; the verse is the folly of youth, but the ideas are those of an honest and not unmanly mind."

Certain verses in his sonnets tell us that during that period his thoughts were not blended with honey only. Take for instance, where he describes his own character,

confessing that he is *"rough in manners,* but gentle in heart" and *"quick to show anger,* but quicker to pardon."

To a woman he addresses himself as follows:

Se pien d'alto disdegno e in me securo
alteramente io parlo e penso e scrivo,
oltre l'etate e il vil tempo in ch'io vivo,
e piacer sozzo e vano onor non curo,
opra e tua, Donna. . .

[If I am filled with lofty scorn and self-confidence, speaking, thinking and writing disdainfully, beyond my age and the vile time in which I live, caring not for base pleasure or vain honor, it is thy doing, Woman. . .]

His *Carme in morte di C. Imbonati* is always quoted, even by gentle Manzonians, as proof of Manzoni's noble and upright spirit and rightly so. But one should recall not only the famous and very beautiful precepts in the *Imbonati* (*"sentir, represe, e meditar,"* etc.), but also the young poet's confessions of his own sentiments:

Nè del mio secol sozzo io già vorrei
rimescolar la fetida belletta,
se un raggio in terra di virtù vedessi
cui sacrar la mia rima.

[Nor indeed of my foul century would I care to stir up the putrid dregs, so long as I saw in the world one ray of virtue to which to devote my rhyme.]

Nor should we leave out that anything but amiable picture of the human world, sketched by the shade of *Imbonati:*

Dove il pensier da la parola è sempre
altro, e virtù per ogni labbro ad alta
voce lodata, ma nei cor derisa;
dov'è spento il pudor; dove sagace
usura è fatto il beneficio, e brutta
lussuria amor; dove sol reo si stima
chi non compie il delitto; ove il delitto
turpe non è, se fortunato; dove
sempre in alto i ribaldi, e i buoni in fondo.
Dura è pel giusto solitario, il credi,
dura, e pur troppo disugual, la guerra
contra i perversi affratellati e molti.

[Where the thought is always different from the word, and virtue is loudly praised by every lip but derided in heart; where modesty is unknown; where clever usury is called benefice and ugly lust, love; where only the man who has committed no crime is judged criminal; where crime is not base if it succeeds; where scoundrels are always on top and good folk at the bottom. A hard place, believe it, for the solitary just man; stern and too often unequal, is his struggle against perverse and powerful brethren.]

One may object that these verses too are previous to his conversion. But these lines from *March*, 1821, are posterior, wherein he invoked the wrath of God upon foreign oppressors:

Sì quel Dio che nell'onda vermiglia
chiuse il rio che inseguiva Israele,
quel che in pugno alla mascia Giaele
pose il maglio ed il colpo guidò. . .

[May that God, who swallowed up in the red wave the tyrant who was pursuing Israel; He who placed the hammer in bold Jael's hand and guided the blow. . .]

For it really is the God of the Old Testament, the God of battles and vengeance who guides the homicide's hand.

And there is the same anger, righteous and lofty, against oppressors, even in that very sweet Canto which closes his *Ermengarda:*

Tu dalla rea progenie
degli oppressor discesa,
cui fu prodezza il numero,
cui fu ragion l'offesa,
e dritto il sangue, e gloria
il non aver pietà,
te collocò la provvida
sventura in fra gli oppressi.

[Thou descended from the wicked progeny of the oppressor, to whom number meant valor, and offence reason, and blood right, and glory not to have compassion; thou, placed there, dost presage misfortune to the oppressed.]

Manzoi's sympathy always went out to the oppressed. In a generous heart, this sympathy can never be divided from indignation against the oppressors and it is only a short step from this indignation to indulgence towards those who are forced to rebel. The fact is also significant that, when Manzoni was an old man, he devoted his last efforts to an apologia for the Italian Revolution, which he believed to be a nobler movement than the French Revolution, because it gave citizens their liberty instead of taking it away from them. If the French Revolution had not been pushed to the criminal excesses

which made it unlawful in Manzoni's eyes, I believe his judgment of it would have been very different. At first he was not opposed to revolutions, which he admitted were necessary in certain cases, but he was opposed to the means employed by the French revolutionists in gaining their ends.

Just at the time when he was meditating and preparing his romance, Manzoni was also collecting material and points for a third tragedy, thus extending his canvas, and this tragedy was to have had for its hero a man rhetorically celebrated by all rebels as the symbol of insurrection against unjust dominion, Spartacus. Wholly absorbed in the *Promessi Sposi,* he put aside *Spartaco* and never did anything with it in the end, but the very fact that he thought of such a theme and of such a protagonist proves that Manzoni's mind was not exclusively occupied with sentiments of resignation.

Manzoni had a critical mind and tended to paradox more than is supposed. If you think it over, he was never attached to the dominant party, but always to the minority in opposition. He belonged to the opposition in literature, defending Romanticism when neoclassic tastes, poets, and prejudices were predominant; he belonged to the opposition in philosophy, embracing Rosmini's ideas; he belonged to the opposition in politics, desiring the union of Italy and liberal institutions in an age of servitude and absolutism; he belonged to the opposition in matters of language, sustaining the

necessity for restoring Tuscan speech, against the purist group. Finally, not knowing whom else or what else he could oppose, he commenced a controversy with himself in his *Discorso sul Romanzo Storico,* in which he seems to be trying to contradict the admiration of Italians for his masterpiece.

True, he was prudent in his oppositions, but very often prudence has other motives besides resignation. In condemnation, or controversy, his weapon was irony. Irony is a very different thing from mildness and, when it touches home, it is far more effective than a furious outburst. The man who flies into a passion is tacitly admitting that the adversary is strong and redoubtable, otherwise there would be no need for all the clamor and gnashing of teeth. But the ironical man shows that after all he cares very little about the man he condemns. It is like saying: you are such a miserable little wretch that you are not worth the trouble of raising my voice and attaching any importance to you. A smile is enough, but what contempt in that smile ! And compared with contempt, hatred is almost praise.

The man who uses irony is really an optimist regarding his readers' intelligence, because irony is not always perceived, especially when it is finely pointed like Manzoni's; but, to offset this optimism, he is profoundly pessimistic about the worth of the persons and things attacked, and that worth is further depreciated and humbled by his same apparent placidity. Thus he

could offer no greater cause for resentment to people who admire such persons or things.

By all this I do not mean to affirm that Manzoni, especially after his conversion, did not incline towards benevolence, benignity, and gentleness. He could have said concerning hatred what he said about love: There is so much of it going round, that there is enough left over to destroy our respected species, so indeed I do not want to increase it, or encourage it.

But it is also true that Manzoni never taught we should basely accept existing conditions, or bad government just because it is powerful; he never confused love of man with acquiescence in evil, with timid silences or shameful adjustments. The honeyed words of some people often hide a poison which they conceal through baseness or self-interest; and under the half-warm ashes of wise folk, there is a fire which they try to extinguish, perhaps sometimes for noble reasons, but often through personal calculation, or through fear of the consequences.

Manzoni, a sincere Christian, a very great poet, a keen and sympathetic anatomist of the human heart, can teach us all that gentle sweetness which emanates from the Gospel pages, to perfume, despite the manure, this little earth inhabited by fierce men. The present writer admits that he needs such example and teaching more than anyone, because his old nature, reformed but not wholly destroyed by supernatural beneficence, breaks

out too often in bitter railing against those who do not love what he loves. But human feelings are linked together in opposing pairs, and the man incapable of insurrection is incapable of self-humiliation.

Love of sinners does not exclude detestation of sin; mercy towards oppressors should not prevent us from defending the oppressed; pity for the erring should not make us less contemptuous of the error. Manzoni too could call himself a rebel in this sense: a Christian rebel, who rebels in the name of justice and truth, and who therefore continues the great Catholic tradition of combatants, at the head of whom in Italy stands Dante, whose Faith did not prevent him from admiring the indomitable spirit of Cato and of Farinata.

PIUS XI

Even the Holy Year has its danger, like the angelic state, sanctification, genius; like all those realities in which the human and the divine are mingled. I do not know how it was regarded by Christians not under obedience to the Pope, who prays like a white mediator between God and men in the place where Peter was crucified. But I know how quickly hotel-keepers, peddlers of pieties, and news-hunters gathered on the spot; one saw the disciples of annihilation making signs with their sardonic grin to the propagators of cloaked pollution; and one saw the timid little stir among those doorporters of the "interior castle," I mean Christians who lose all the pulp through their terror of the rind.

But I know what the Holy Year should have meant to simple subjects of the Holy Roman Catholic Empire. I know it because the Pope told us, as he alone could tell us, in the Bull *Infinita Dei Misericordia,* read and promulgated on the Feast of the Ascension, 1924.

In other times, less enlightened than ours by the comfortable heresy of indifference, the Pope's words were spelt out and explained one by one, just as Platonic or Shakespearian texts are expounded today in Universities. When the Father spoke, his children listened in order to understand and they understood in order to

obey. Today, even the majority of those who boast that they are genuine Catholics cannot spare more than a glance at the Pope's Allocutions, Bulls, and Encyclicals, as presented in newspaper summaries, because they are far more interested in the report of some match, meeting, or first night. The Pope speaks in Latin, a dead language; he speaks for believers, a race that is half dead; and the newspaper reader condescends to repeat with Christ, "Let the dead bury their dead" — terrible and prophetic words which apply to the very people who repeat them with such awful tranquillity.

The objection may be allowed that there were much stronger worldly reasons at one time for close attention to religious matters. The Pope is a personage unique in the whole world; not merely unique in his dignity and primacy, but in all senses and to all men. To historians, he is the unique witness of the most ancient past; the heir of Moses, the law-giver; the successor of the Cæsars, the sole survivor of the contemporaries of Tiberius. To philosophers, the Pope alone possesses the living tradition of the Platonism of John and the Aristotelianism of Thomas, and uses it to judge the facts of the Universe: Greek philosophy, which is mere learning and mummified history to professors, is still living thought to the Pope, so far as Christianity, by Divine Will, has incorporated its essence through the saints. To the artist, the Pope is the sole remaining monarch in the antique and noble sense, who really reigns over

men: a millenary monarch, who shows himself to the people in his official capacity with all the richness of Assyria, the majesty of Solomon, the authority of St Peter, speaking Virgil's language under Michelangelo's vault, accompanied by the music of Palestrina. To politicians, he is the spiritual sovereign of almost three hundred million men, with missionaries, agents, and vicars in every part of the five continents, so that even from a purely human point of view, the Vatican is one of the greatest focuses of universal life.

Finally, to the Catholic, the Pope follows Peter and the successors of Peter in continuing the divine work of Christ for the fulfilment of Redemption and, in his capacity as Head and Teacher of the Church, he has the infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost. While remaining at an immeasurable distance from God, yet among all mortal creatures he approaches nearest to Him.

The Pope is a man like all of us, yet speaks in the name of Divinity; he is earthly like us, yet speaks always of Heaven, even when he seems to be talking about the earth; while still alive, he is in perpetual communion with the dead; he is modern, yet seems most ancient, because he represents continuity; he is Italian, yet addresses all nations; he is a sinner, yet can blot out every sin and distribute the treasury of graces left us by the saints. This man, supreme among mankind, must be listened to and obeyed before any master, before any monarch whatever.

Among the two hundred and fifty-nine Vicars of Christ, who have shepherded the immense flock of the baptized up to the present day, all the different types of mankind have appeared in turn. There have been hermit Popes, Popes who defended cities and drew up treaties of peace, warrior Popes on horseback, æsthetic Popes who were the patrons of genius, Popes who represented the stern face of justice, Popes who personified the sweetness of clemency. Some were legislators first and foremost and others were builders of palaces and churches. Among them, there were seventy-five saints and more than one definitely unworthy man. But all of them labored with varying strength and fortune at the unique edifice of the Universal Apostolic Church.

They were all admirable, more or less, in individual ways. Some of them compelled admiration at a distance, a reverence mingled almost with fear. Others inspired the real affection due to a Father, in the first and dear sense of the paternal name, and those were loved with all the strength of the heart.

Today we have for Pope a man born in honest Lombardy and now made a citizen of all cities of the world. He was named Achille Ratti in the world and will now figure in history and on monuments as Pius XI. After God and his parents, he had two great loves: for the mountains towering up into lofty space, and for ancient volumes which reveal the mysteries of time. Now he spends his days shut up at the bottom of a valley, to de-

vote himself to making a better future for men. This man of books, whose life's desire is to make the pages of the One Book become true life, spoke a short time ago inviting the world to go on a pilgrimage for a holy purpose. Let us listen to him.

It is not my business to comment on the words of the Pope in their context. I like to look at the facets of diamonds rather than admire the stones in a setting.

I will not say more than this: that the Bull *Infinita Dei Misericordia* is closely derived — like a theorem from axioms — from the Encyclical *Ubi Arcana Dei,* which was the great Master's first admonition to exhausted and fever-stricken humanity. In natural harmony with the principles of Christ, Pope Pius XI opposes the world; he works to defeat the spirit of the world. Our age is full of wars and rumors of war, and the Pope wants peace. We live in a period of cruelty and rapine, and the Pope wants charity to prevail among all men. There is discord and the clash of factions everywhere, and the Pope prays for reconciliation, reunion, fraternity.

According to his desire, the Holy Year was not to have been merely an assembling of pilgrims, a liturgical spectacle, a kindling of devotion, a gaining of extraordinary indulgences. It was to have been first and foremost the beginning of peace, of that true peace which would restore to tortured and torturing humanity the light of

a primal repose. This peace could come about only through a fourfold reconciliation: perfect reconciliation between every man and God; loyal reconciliation between the members of one same nation; sincere reconciliation between nation and nation; loving reconciliation of separated Christians with the Universal Church. It was Pius XI's hope, and the true purpose of the Holy Year, to bring about those four covenants, or at least to prepare the way for them.

With regard to the first, nothing can be added to what the saints of the Old and New Testament said, from the exile or Ur to the present day. Our modern pride, both in popular tendencies and in philosophy, has exalted man into a demi-god (indeed, to borrow the Devil's ancient definition, *simia Dei*), and therefore it is much against the grain to make the first act of heroic humility, implying an admission of our perversity, whether manifest or concealed.

But a man must genuinely feel — not merely say — that he is erring and sinful; in addition to saying it in words, he must be deeply conscious within himself that he is nothing before the all that is God; he must love God for the pure love of God and men for love of Him, even to hatred of himself; he must aim at this ultimate goal of the new greatness which is sanctity, before he can have any hope of peace. God is not at war with us: on the contrary, by the secret co-operation of grace, He helps the very people who are warring against Him.

It is we who are guilty: we are continually making war on Him — creatures who corrupt His creation, subjects who disobey His laws, sons who blaspheme His name and turn away from Him. It is we who should make peace again. God is an infinite being, therefore infinite in love, and He is satisfied with very little: a second's shame, one word of remorse, a tear, a promise. He is a Poor Man so rich that He blesses the most miserable alms. He accepts even leprous hearts if He sees they have the first beginning of a desire for salvation; He accepts contaminated lips if they pronounce His name with an impulse of love.

In his abounding compassion, God has included in the laws of the spiritual universe the most marvellous of all laws: the vicarious application of merit. The perfection of a saint is a patrimony which can be used to make amends for the imperfections of the weak; the sufferings of the martyrs avail to cancel out the punishment of our evil pleasures; the mystics' fire of charity serves to warm our icy chill. What pure souls have offered to God over and above the purity sufficient for their personal salvation is distributed for the benefit and help of impure souls. The Church is the administrator of this patrimony, and indulgences are simply the form under which these infinite sums of merit are distributed: celestial alms offered by the dead to the living. To put it crudely, the Holy Year was an extraordinary liberality to mendicant sinners of the whole treasury of graces,

amassed from the surplus holiness of the saints, and administered by the Pope.

The other reconciliations are no less important and urgent. But they cannot be rightly effected unless the first be sought first by all men.

Everyone knows now that the War did not end, as poor folk imagined, in the November of 1918. Like dipsomaniacs with alcohol, men had the habit of blood and they continued to crave for it. The slaughter which was suspended provisionally at the frontiers went on in the interior of countries. Russia, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Spain, turned to civil war, and these countries were reddened with the blood of brothers. Even now there are nations divided into two regiments under arms. Men who said they desired the salvation of a nation decimated that nation; they arose in the name of their country's greatness and killed the children of their country. Civil war, the most atrocious of all forms of war, is still rampant in too many parts of the world, brought about by pride and greed, the pride of men who imagine they have the monopoly of truth and justice (reserved to God alone), the greed for power, glory, riches. Christianity is based on humility and renunciation, that is, on the virtues directly opposed to the root causes of so much evil; it calls us back to true peace by those ways which alone would make peace possible.

War goes on even between nation and nation; war that is more hypocritical than before, but none the less cruel. Imperfect treaties, involuntary or deliberate non-compliances, the arrogance of conquerors, the bad faith of those who were beaten, the restlessness of small states, the unprincipled, selfish ferocity of large states, old and new rivalries, efforts at reconquest, the dread of peoples who were victimized in the past and do not perceive that they are now the executioners: those are the chief causes of the disturbance and ferment with which Europe and Asia are convulsed today, under their apparent tranquillity.

Christianity is not for individuals only, but for nations too; and the commands of the Gospel are addressed to peoples as well as to men. A little more humility as opposed to national vanity; a more genuine love of the enemies of yesterday and of tomorrow; a little less greed for material wealth: such are the only radical remedies for this painful state of disguised war, which deprives the men and women of all countries today of their serenity, strength, and life. The Pope wants the peace to be a genuine pardon, that is, a forgetting; and he aims at charity between nation and nation, which is no less necessary than the charity which the rich owe the poor and which saints owe sinners.

The final reconciliation, between Christian Churches, is by no means last in the Pope's desire and heart. He has reason to hope. Signs are not lacking which make

one anticipate an imminent general return to the obedience of the supreme witness to Christ: one fold under one Shepherd.

Protestant Churches are naturally preoccupied by the steady decline in the membership of their various creeds and congregations. They feel the need of alliance and union. They are trying at least to arrive at a common creed and to remedy the decay of spiritual authority, which is due chiefly to lack of unity. Certain Churches are obviously going back to the principles and rites of Rome, and Catholics are genuinely anxious to make it easier for our separated brethren to return. The Oriental Church has no longer its political despot, and is looking towards the West. In endeavoring to unite themselves, Protestant Churches have tried to find some point of contact with Rome: some appeals have been made from both sides and several colloquies have taken place between Anglican and Catholic theologians to try to prepare the way for a future understanding.

During the solemnity of the Holy Year, the Pope invited all Catholics to pray that this marvellous reconciliation we dream of may come to pass. We certainly did not see it during that great year which opened on Christmas Eve, 1925, before the closed doors of St Peter's. But if the prayers which pilgrims and penitents sent up around the tombs of the crucified Apostles brought it a little nearer in time, made it

realizable on the earthly plane, *as it is already realized on the mystical plane,* their faith could not obtain a greater reward, and the Holy Year of 1925 would be remembered as one of the great dates in the history of Christianity.

DOMENICO GIULIOTTI

I MET Giuliotti for the first time during the war with Africa, when I was fifteen years old. He was introduced to me by a common friend, a boy answering to the foreign name of Aleramo — though born at Incisa on the Arno (but indeed he had not been suckled by any descendant of Petrarch's nurse). Aleramo had only one enthusiasm in the world, the latest models of locomotives, and he could not put three words together. But, as is always the case, he admired with a sort of awe what he could not do himself, that is, my compositions and those of Giuliotti, whom he met in the same boarding-house. Giuliotti had come down from Greve at that time to live with a certain Zucconi, a Garibaldian professor and the father of that very beautiful girl who was the first love of the young Gabriele d'Abruzzo.

Well, one day the good Aleramo brought along to my house this Domenico, who had expressed a wish to make my acquaintance. I remember it was a Sunday in November, one of those rainy, muggy, depressing Sundays which seem to be more gloomy in Florence than in any other city of the universe. In those days, my house was such that I would not dare bring a stranger into it, least of all a gentleman and a writer.

I raced down the stairs (of course I was on the top floor) and I saw before me a long, lean young man, dressed in the fashion of the Bohemian rebels of those years: a wide black hat, a large black neck-tie in a butterfly bow, a flowing black cloak thrown open like a mantle — he was something between the *Carbonaro* of '48, the poet of '80 and the anarchist of '95. With the eagerness of adolescence, we immediately began to discuss everything that lives and moves between heaven and earth, and there we remained, for nearly three hours, standing on the muddy footpath of Via dell' Orvivolo, by the entrance to a bird-fancier's shop, whence issued an odor reminiscent of anything but woods. We were not even aware of the feeble drizzle which treasonably began to descend from a sky more grey and obscure than one of Terenzio Mamiani's books. Giuliotti was very much impressed by my familiarity with Darwin and by my dogmatic assurance in philosophical and scientific matters. On the other hand, I almost resented his insistent and provoking question:

"But anyhow, you *are* an artist ?"

I protested. At that time — do not forget I was fifteen — I thought no kind of learning more valuable than positive and intellectual knowledge. Although I read poetry and even wrote verse, I would have exchanged all the lyrics of Italy for Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea.*

It may be that this dialectical and pessimistic "scientism" of mine did not suit the furious little poet of Romanticism, such as Giuliotti then was. If I remember rightly, he never again put in an appearance from that day. So the impartial Aleramo, go-between of immature geniuses, spared us our breath and our shoes for the time being.

MANY years afterwards, I found Giuliotti again at Foro Trajano and from that time we never lost sight of each other. We formed a new friendship as we gradually discovered what agreement of sentiment and nature underlay our superficial opposition in thought. In conversation and writing, we wrangled like two sons of the same mother who find themselves fighting under enemy kings. I had left him a maker of verse and an anarchist, but when I found him again, he was a poet and — what is more — a prophet.

To explain myself at once, I had better say that I mean a prophet of absolute and complete Catholicism, for he accepted the whole of the Faith, disdaining the compromises and allowances of the lukewarm, who use religion like a sublimate, in doses of one per cent. Giuliotti had gone back to Rome by passing through France (and between ourselves it is a very beautiful road) and he had learned, through familiarity with De Maistre, Veuillot, Hello, and De Blois, how to feed on the marrow of the Lion of Juda and how to inebriate

himself with the old wine of the First Testament and the new wine of the Second. Famishing like one who has had to content himself for many years with husks thrown to swine, he sought with loving patience in the Doctors and Mystics for some crumbs of heavenly bread. At last he had gone back into the Church through the great portals of St Peter's rather than by some little sacristy door. To his mind, the Bull *Unam Sanctam* was always in force, the *Syllabus* was an oracular handbook, the *Summa* of Aquinas the supreme ideological refutation and the Pope always the King of Kings, even if he was not recognized and obeyed by the plebeians in power. Giuliotti never left two texts out of his hand: the *Apocalypse* and the *Divina Commedia.* In the former he read the future, which he thought should be very near; in the latter, the present, which he considered infernal.

Having come, as I have said, from anarchy, he thirsted for obedience; having left literature, he thirsted for truth. Unhappy in that he possessed a delicate and fastidious soul, he suffered from the foulness of the world and from human ignominy as an offence against his God, who is Judge, and even as a sort of injury to himself who loved God for His justice and for the splendor of His mercy.

Anyone reading only a few pages of his *Ora di Barabba,* would imagine Giuliotti to be a sort of fakir spitting out curses, who waits from day to day for the

rain of fire in order to gloat over the screams of the burning reprobates; a sort of Nero converted to dogma but not to pity, who listens in ambush for the first sound of the galloping horses of the Apocalypse, that he may mount bareback on the fiercest and pursue the damned, with whistling scourges, across the plains of the earth.

It is a false picture. Giuliotti has the verbal violence of an affectionate man who tries to hide his tenderness and who suffers through the evil of others more than those who work the evil or who are injured by it. Mingled with our common misery, there is in him something of the child, the woman, the poet, and the saint: he is simple, passionate, fantastic, sore, and raging. He loves men more than those who flatter humanity have ever loved them. He loves them so much that every sin and baseness of theirs is to his soul — far more sensitive than flaccid or metallic natures — a shock, a wound, a spasm. Then he is inspired with a longing to wage war on them, because they are not perfect as he would wish them to be for their own sake. He works with passionate fury, trying to inspire them with disgust and terror, to see whether he cannot drag them back, by visions of chastisement, into the light, to the feet of God. Sometimes perhaps he indulges too much in that prolonged reverberation of cutting words, which recalls the expressive vehemence of Isaias or of Dante, though he has not a divine mission or the

excuse of finding himself in the real hell, since he is only in the outer portal. Anyhow his indignation is utterly sincere and very short-lived. His heart was born to love and his pen to curse. But he is always ready to forgive the man who hates him, ready to recognize a mistake, ready to humiliate himself before God: and his humility is every bit as genuine as his violence. If Giuliotti is a sledge-hammer, it is affection that gives the power to his blows.

Certain of his pages might have been written in the fiery light of Hades, but then there are others, and very many, which might have been composed by a hermit kneeling in his cell, with all the Seraphim about him: pages embroidered with lofty aspirations and prayer, like a carpet of fleur-de-lys spread out under the feet of Christ and Our Lady. But it is an old story that the majority of readers are deaf to the former and skip over the latter, so that poor Giuliotti keeps his fame as a wolf converted by Torquemada rather than by St Francis.

Yet it is enough to know him a little intimately in order to love him. I always see him before my eyes as he was when I met him for the second time, twelve years ago, in Rome. At first sight, his tall, spare figure gave the impression of an Etruscan hermit, or of a martyr. He resembled, more than any man I have met in life, one of those Spanish gentlemen, with long, pensive faces, whom El Greco painted in *The Burial*

of Count Orgaz. There was in his face, so unsymmetrical and unusual, the gentle melancholy of exile. His eyes were of different colors, but in both of them goodness shone. He used to dress in dark clothes, with orderly simplicity. He led a solitary life. He had few friends, but these he loved more than himself. When he was dragged into company, he was like a nightingale taken from its familiar darkness and placed under the electric light with sparrows and parrots. He frowned and remained silent as a rule, but occasionally he would kindle up at some word from another and then he would be most eloquent, with a powerful and illuminating eloquence that seized upon sophisms and occult meanings. This was because his eloquence sprang up from his own fiery soul, instead of being strained through the sieve of memory. But he would sink back immediately into his taciturnity, like an invalid under his rug.

With such a character and such renown, it was no surprise that he was "tracked," as Ariosto wrote, "by hounds from whom God preserve you." It was for this very reason I began to have an affection for him, even when I could not always accept what he affirmed. So long as he was in the service of the Devil, he had loved the children of the Devil; but from the moment he put himself under God's orders, he gave no quarter to the enemies of God. He admitted no compromise possible between the Gospel

and the World, between Christ and Anti-Christ. A certain type of Catholic sickened him (and for that he had and has all the reason in this world and beyond): the modern Catholic who must have a look-in at the Witches' Sabbath on the eve of Mass and taste the cauldron of Satan because, after all, Satan is a power too and one never knows; the Catholic who is willing to admit that Paganism has something to be said for it and that, after all, Protestants have not all the wrong on their side. There is only one way of being a Catholic, and those who do not want to be that might just as well join one of the five hundred and fifty-five Protestant churches or, better still, a Lodge of Freemasons, or a circle of Theosophists, Anthroposophists, or Necromancers. But modern Catholics are so sheepish and cowardly that they immediately dub an integral Catholic like Giuliotti a "wild beast Catholic." Well, is not the lion (which happens to be one of the symbolic names of Christ), the first of all wild beasts ?

> *. . . crucis arborem, in qua leo fortis*
> *vicit adversarium, fractis portis mortis.*

That is a verse by Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, a Franciscan and a saint.

It is pleasant to recall my first journey to the wild beast's den.

Giuliotti lived at that time, and still lives, in a village of wine-shops a few miles from Florence, where he is part owner of a house and farm, both of them small, but large enough for backbiters to call him rich.

One Autumn morning I mounted the dirty carriage of a steam tram which was supposed to take me up there in two hours. This little train, unlike the men it carried, had grown darker and more impudent as it grew older. It was in the habit of passing freely through the public streets, side by side with red carts more beautiful by far, and through square places intended for fairs and little boys. It was all smoke, whistle, and racket, but its stops were longer than its flights. In this it reminded me of certain writers who wrap themselves in a fog to convey an idea of profundity, who pipe shrilly at every inn-sign to let us know they are there, but who cover little ground and that little on the well-worn tracks of the main road, so that in the end, instead of bringing us to the summit of Parnassus in triumph, they reach the bottom of a commercial valley at one o'clock at night and stop there for ever.

But that morning the engine-driver and stoker seemed to be in a fearful hurry to arrive at the end of their journey; or else they had drank more than is reasonable, or had got up that day with their strength renewed. Anyhow, the fact remains that I could see them through the window, bending and bustling over

the engine, flinging bundle after bundle of wood and shovelfuls of coal into the furnace, their faces scorched with enthusiasm and the reflection from the fire. They were like two of Vulcan's apprentices on a day when shield and armor had to be forged for a greater God.

We passed between rows of houses which belonged neither to town nor country; little villages which had ceased to be country and were not yet part of the city, so that they had all the disadvantages of the country without its beauty and solitude, and all the disadvantages of the city without its order and cleanliness. There were women at the windows, women at the doors, women in the footpaths and in the front gardens; women with fiery red faces, or waxen pale, and along with the women there were children whimpering, rags fluttering, hens scratching. There was an incredible, asinine stop at every corner. The sky was all light grey, the earth all dark grey. The clouds promised more rain and the mud recalled what had fallen during the night. The black oak woods looked like sacrificial groves; the cypresses stood out like the signposts of graveyards, and the panting smoke of the steam tram fraternized with the timid smoke from the chimneys, with the haughty smoke from the factories, and with the slow vapors of the fog.

Finally, with a last, prolonged, despairing whistle, beseeching help, we arrived. Giuliotti, who had

obeyed that piercing summons, met me almost at the top of the main street of the little town. He led me first into a room that was half in the basement, with one iron-barred window only slightly above the street level. The scanty space was all taken up by paper: shelves crammed with books, piles of books on the ground, masses of newspapers, reviews, and volumes on the two tables, under the two tables, on the chairs, on top of a book-press and packed inside it, everywhere.

The drizzling day, the dust inseparable from reams of paper, the smoke of our cigarettes made that dark den still darker. It was not even illuminated from a corner by one of those white rays which light up the subterranean meditations of Rembrandt's philosophers.

"Would you care for a little walk ?"

We went out into the street. Giuliotti made me admire a square in the shape of a stubbed triangle, formerly laid out like the perspective plan of a picture: low porticoes at the sides, at the top a church built with much economy of imagination and, in a corner, a bronze statue of a navigator looking rather out of place among all those walls, since he had been one of the first to break into the millennial solitude of the Atlantic.

"Would you care to see a little of the country ?"

"Yes. Let's."

We took a fine pebbled road that descended to meet

us between grassy vineyards and pointed sycamores. As we walked up, we noticed at a certain point a gate standing a few yards before us and, behind the gate, a long, white building, too plain to be a villa and too severe to be a house.

"What's that ?"

"The Hospital."

"Shall we turn back ?"

"All right."

Once more we passed through the town and out of it again. This time Giuliotti led me along a road steeper and not so fine as that other, winding between tall hedges and crumbling walls. And here too we came to a gate, a stout wall, a field lying open to the south, white with tombstones and black with crosses. There was no need to ask what it was.

"Shall we turn back ?"

"All right."

Giuliotti set out by a third road. This also ascended and at the first turn he showed me a tall old building, all shut up, with a stone cross over the entrance and shining black bars before each window.

"And what's this ?"

"The Prison."

Then I began to perceive the origin of Giuliotti's melancholy. One could not escape from that place without encountering some reminder of affliction. To one who stood alone in the centre of that triangle —

death, pain, and condemnation — there was no better means of getting away from it than to become inebriated with sanctity or poetry. Men are infirm, dead, or imprisoned, and that little town gave a faithful picture of the world.

This time, however, instead of turning back, we continued to walk up, between fields which became fairer and more fair, as wider spaces of earth and a vaster sky opened around us, refreshing the eye and the spirit. Near the top of the ascent, we perceived a group of ancient walls, which might be a great castle or the enclosure of some little hamlet.

Both surmises were correct: we had arrived at Monte Fioralle, a village constructed inside the walls of a famous feudal stronghold. We went in through a door which looked like the entrance to some poor farm-house, and instead we found ourselves inside a little church, where Christ had been waiting for six hundred years, looking out with large white eyes from the gold background of a Cimabue crucifix.

After a prayer, we left by another door and found ourselves inside the old castle, or rather in the hamlet. Imagine a rectangular little square with barely enough room to hold the three streets which converged into it at sharp angles; a shrine built over a projecting spur of wall, on which flowers, neither quite fresh nor withered, were standing under a terra-cotta Madonna; open courtyard doors disclosing little cloistered sloping

gardens; tiny houses painted light ochre or pale indigo, with green sun-shutters and half-closed doors; a single black lamp-post, a clean pavement with some sparse blades of grass: silence. It all seemed too good to be true. One would imagine this little place had been lifted out bodily from some print of Leopoldine days, or that it had been prepared for a theatre stage, to be the scene of a love idyll of a hundred years ago. One felt immeasurably distant from our own century with all its mechanical and clamorous enormities. On the sills of the closed windows were the usual pots of geraniums and cedar grass. One thought to enter a street and discovered it was the open-air corridor of a hidden house. A gate looked just like the entrance to a villa and instead it was the opening to a narrow little road, which descended between low, humble houses to the valley.

The main road circled round the hamlet in an oval ring, like a guardian walk. Along there I found one of those shops which I had not seen for thirty years. It had a low ceiling like the shops in Venice; it was dark, humble, clean and, in its poor way, rich in all the little delights of the childhood of other days. There were those little paper cones of sugared aniseed, hanging in bunches, with tassels made of leaves dangling from them; little macaroni dolls with their hands on their hips; chocolates shaped like hearts and stars, but without tin foil; big sweets the color of radishes

and carrots; tombola cards with moral verses at the bottom; honey-colored and pink bundles of fire-lighters; home-made biscuits that disclosed the white halves of the nuts.

It seemed to both of us that we had found our true country again, and we returned happier and more light-hearted than when we had set out. The Wild Man,[1] only that he lives in the woods, would rent a house at Monte Fioralle.

Three gentle ladies and the maid were waiting for us at home, together with a cat that had lost one eye. The table was festively prepared, with napkins in fluted folds, crystal bottles and glasses that showed reflections of dawn, and there was a richly laden sideboard and polished chairs. Giuliotti's mother, his wife and aunt bustled around us, happy in seeing us happy. And when the bells were ringing noon, I sat down with an appetite at the table of friendship.

I HAVE not described this first exploration solely for the pleasure one feels in recalling a happy day in the past, but because I think, like the ancient painters, that the background forms part of the picture and explains it. I remember that visit best because it was the first of many such, which were opportunities for discussions most important to me and which I could not set out

[1] *Translator's Note:* Papini is here referring to himself. He has been dubbed "L'Omo Salvatico" since he wrote, in conjunction with Domenico Giuliotti, a book entitled *Dizioniario dell'Omo Salvatico.*

at length here. It would be necessary to relate the story of Giuliotti's life, which seems poor in events, and yet, to those who value interior vicissitudes more than external happenings, is a far more adventurous life than many that are pleasanter or apparently more dramatic. One should relate his solitary childhood in the farm-house at Varrazzano, his years of study at Florence, Rome, Siena — out of which he did not scrape even a miserable degree in law; his covert and open battles with his uncle, a solicitor, who discovered, to his infinite dismay, that he had a mad poet for a pupil instead of a sensible heir to the Code. Then his marriage with a girl from Siena, despite his relatives' disapproval, and his peregrinations from republicanism to anarchy, from faith to atheism, from atheism to theosophy, from theosophy to the Gospel, from the Gospel to the one and eternal Church that rules and teaches from Rome.

Lastly, one should explain all the books which Giuliotti began and never finished, of those he half finished and then destroyed, of those he has dreamed of and perhaps will never write. It must not be imagined that the best of him is found in the printed volumes bearing his name. In his *Ombra d'un'Ombra,* lyrics of fervent emotion are mingled with that macabre pessimism that has a sort of romanticist soot still clinging to it. In his *Ora di Barabba,* there are pages like foot-notes to the prophets, pages that might have

been written by a Christian Juvenal or by an Agrippa d'Aubigné who was not a Calvinist, pages that rise to an airy point like a prayer of sculptured marble. In his *Tizzi e Fiamme,* the saints shine out in the ardor of their sanctity like those antique images with haloes of gold, and colder souls are warmed by that glowing art until they see them living again in the light of greatness. His *Polvere dell' Esilio* is like a church set on a hill, built with stones of theology and columns of prayer, but all lighted up and decorated with the bright wealth of poetry. His articles in the *Dizionario dell'Omo Salvatico* (Dictionary of a Wild Man) are, according to the subject, onslaughts of a crusader, miniatures for a Breviary, or nostalgic reminiscences of bygone joys and passions.

But those who know Giuliotti intimately, who have discovered the way to his affection, know that his writings are but a section of the fruit, and perhaps not the most substantial. In conversation or by letter, he gives immensely more to his friends — or even to people who are almost strangers — than he offers to the world in his books. There is something in him of the pre-Gutenberg apostle who must look souls in the eye and adapt his reasonings, comparisons and appeals to different natures. Then this man, whom the superficial think an unconcerned provincial gentleman, suddenly becomes an angelic tempter who pursues with burning words tepidity or stupidity to its last defence.

The placid ruminator becomes a sort of Mount Etna, and woe to the man who gets under the shower of rocks with his head uncovered! But that volcano come-to-life knows how to diffuse the warmth of affection too, as well as to send up the rumblings of menace; there are perennial flowers of intellectual charity growing on the burning path of that lava.

He has printed some letters in his *Ora di Barabba,* which were once real sheets of manuscript folded up in an envelope and stamped. But there are other letters, even more beautiful and profound, which have been read only by the persons to whom they were addressed; if these were published, they would give a better idea of Giuliotti to people who, scarcely knowing him, think he can do nothing but vociferate curses and satires. But we fear that Giuliotti is one of those "posthumous" men who are fully known only the moment they cease to exist; that is, when they begin their second life in the remorse, in the gratitude and in the love of men:

E se il mondo sapessi il cuor ch'egli ebbe. . .
[Ah! If the world knew the heart he had. . .]

But the world always learns some things too late, because it is so taken up with handing out gilt haloes to those renowns that have no tomorrow. As for men of Giuliotti's stamp, who emerged from their solitude only to reiterate the most formidable truths,

the world cannot stand them, until they have their mouths full of darkness and earth.

Giuliotti is a nostalgic poet and an absolute Catholic. In commonplace and exaggerated jargon, that is expressed as a Utopian day-dreamer and a reactionary fanatic. What is he trying to find, this furious shade, in the unhappy, electro-technical Purgatory of our days? The dilettante student of mental aberrations examines him as though he were a survival from a mediæval bestiary; but some occasional, humble self-reviler, who seeks with tears for a trace of the Magi's gold among the ruins of the ruins, admires Giuliotti and loves him. He claims and looks for no more. This bold soldier in an army that has been campaigning for nineteen centuries is in God's pay and therefore does not seek wages or glory from men. How could such as they, with all their treasures and crowns, compensate him for what he still lacks, or console him in his secret desperation? He has penetrated too far into the "wondrous swirl" [1] not to know that to a real Catholic, such as he aspires to be, mere feeble good will in spiritual turmoil, and literary success, are not enough.

Il n'y a qu'une tristesse, c'est de n'être pas des Saints. These words of Léon Bloy contain the secret of Domenico Giuliotti's sadness.

[1] *Cf.* Dante, *Paradiso*, xxx, 68. Translator.

CÆSAR AND VIRGIL[1]

The scene was in the Earthly Paradise.

A beautiful woman, who had come down from Heaven at Our Lady's command, spoke thus to a Florentine poet:

> *Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano;*
> *e sarai meco sanza fine cive*
> *di quella Roma, onde Cristo è Romano.*
>
> ["Here shalt thou be short time a forester, and with me everlastingly shalt be a citizen of that Rome whereof Christ is a Roman."][2]

So even the Earthly Paradise is a wild place to Beatrice, and its inhabitants are *foresters,* rustic if not quite savage.

They become citizens, civil, civilized, only in ascending to the Celestial Paradise, to that eternal city where Christ awaits us.

Dante called this city by that name which he held so sacred, Rome; but it is the same abode which early Christians, after the revelation of St John, used to call the heavenly Jerusalem. Why did the poet of the Three Kingdoms change the Apostle's nomenclature ?

[1] Lecture given in Florence, at the Palazzo Pucci, 9th December 1923, at the inauguration of the *Studio Cattolico,* and repeated in Milan, in the *Opera Cardinal Ferrari,* 16th December 1923.

[2] *Purgatorio,* XXXII, 100–102, (Professor Okey's translation in the Temple Classics Dante.)

Was it poetic licence, mere fantasy, or sacrilege?

The reader who penetrates beyond the letter will at once answer, None of these things.

In addition to physical geography and political geography, there is a mystical geography, still waiting for its Columbus and its Atlas. On this mystical map, the two cities of Jerusalem and Rome are like the two foci of an ellipse enclosing all the illuminated part of our world.

There were two Holy Cities: no other city in the world, however populous and rich, could rival them, still less surpass them. Not only do they stand for the two chief pillars of universal civilization, but they are the two fixed termini of universal religion, the Catholic religion, which originated in the first and remained fixed in the second throughout the centuries. Jerusalem was the city of God; Rome, the city of Man. Jerusalem willed to destroy the God-Man and was destined to destruction; Rome wished to destroy the Church of Christ, and was saved from destruction because it was chosen to be the see of the Head of the Church of Christ. Jerusalem gave the books of the Promise, of the Covenant, and of the Revelation; Rome offered the imperial network of her prefectures for dioceses, her solemn language, the tradition of her law.

Jerusalem was chosen for the Manifestation and the Resurrection of God and no-one can deprive her of her supernatural primacy. But the Jews refused the

gift they had been invoking for thousands of years, whereas the blood of the Apostles made the soil of Rome sacred for all time, and for nineteen hundred years now the Vicar of Christ has ruled from Rome over the immense kingdom of Christians.

Catholicism retained what was best in the mysticism of Jerusalem and the government of Rome; it is the heir of both prophets and legionaries, of the Judges of Israel and the Emperors of Rome, of Moses and Julius Cæsar. The Church, which like her Founder is both human and divine, has preserved all that is divine in the inspired testimony of Judea, and has lost nothing of what was most loftily human in the splendor of Roman civilization.

This strong welding could not have happened without the will of God. Can anyone argue that the Will of God, so evident in all the facts of history, could not have functioned in deciding the destiny of the Church, willed by God, founded by His Only Begotten, illuminated by the fire of the Third Person ?

Therefore, to us Catholics, there is not only one Chosen People, there are two: the Jews and the Romans, both divinely destined to be fused in the visible body of the Universal and Roman Church.

Since it is certain that God willed it, is it possible that He never gave Rome the faintest sign of her mystic destiny ?

There are Jews and Samaritans in the Gospel, Chaldeans and Greeks, and even Romans.

It was a Roman Centurion who asked Christ to cure a poor servant and this obscure Roman soldier wrung these prophetic words from the Master's heart:

> Amen I say to you: I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the *west,* and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness.[1]

Pilate's wife was a Roman: she believed Christ was a Just Man and implored that He should be saved from the fury of the Jews.

Pilate was a Roman: he tried to deliver the Divine Accused from a felon's death by many ruses and expedients.

The Centurion who remained standing on Calvary before Christ was a Roman, and when he witnessed the manner of that death, he rendered glory to God, exclaiming: "Indeed this was the Son of God." [2]

Therefore the first Gentile people to believe, from the very first days, in the power, in the innocence, in the divinity of Christ, were Romans.

Further, in addition to the books written by Jews in the New Testament, there are two which were composed, as is generally held certain now, by a Roman,

[1] *Matthew* viii. 10–12. [2] *Matthew* xxvii. 54.

by that Saint Luke, companion of Paul, who wrote in Greek (but with evident borrowings, even grammatical, from Latinity): he wrote the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Therefore we find the collaboration between Israel and Rome carried out even in the holy books: and notice that no other foreigner, except the Roman Luke, had any part in it.[1]

For many centuries now, Christians have perceived another wonderful conjunction of historical cycles: Christ willed to be born the moment the Roman Empire was solidly established, and actually at the very moment of Rome's greatest splendor; when it looked as though the peace of Augustus had gathered together all the peoples of East and West, uniting them at last under one same political law, as though to prepare them better for one same divine law. In his *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle,* Bossuet merely expands this idea, which had been already explicitly formulated by St Thomas in his *Summa.* Dante, that faithful believer in Christ and in Rome, also took it from St Thomas and expounded it. The Poet wrote in the *Convivio:*

> Nor was the world ever so perfectly disposed, nor shall be

[1] The Gospel of St Mark too was believed by many to be Roman in origin. See B. J. Bacon, *Is Mark a Roman Gospel?* (Harvard Theological Studies, 1919.) Recently P. L. Couchoud (*Revue de l'Histoire des Religions,* juillet-déc. 1926; mars-juin 1927) tried to show, especially by comparing with the Greek text, that the original composition was Latin. This was the opinion of St Ephrem too, accepted by Baronius.

again, as then when it was guided by the voice of one sole prince and commander of the Roman people, as Luke the evangelist beareth witness. And therefore there was universal peace which never was before nor shall be, and the ship of human fellowship was speeding straight to due port in tranquil voyage.

O ineffable and incomprehensible wisdom of God, which against thy coming into Syria didst make so great preparations beforehand in heaven above and here in Italy; and oh most foolish and vilest brutes, pasturing in the semblance of men, who presume to discourse against our faith, and with your spinning and delving would fain know what God hath ordained with so great wisdom! Cursed be ye, and your presumption, and whoso believeth on you![1]

Further than that, Dante even sees God's miraculous assistance in many events of Rome's ancient history, since God willed at all costs to bring about the triumph of that city which He had destined to be the metropolis of His Vicar.

Wherefore we need demand no more [concludes Dante] in order to see that a special birth and a special progress, thought out and ordained by God, was that of the holy city. And verily I am of firm opinion that the stones that are fixed in her walls are worthy of reverence, and the soil where she sits more worthy than man can preach or prove.[2]

Therefore when the Poet called Paradise by the name of Rome, it was not for love of novelty, nor in a flight

[1] *Convivio*, IV, v. 8. Mr Wicksteed's translation in Temple Classics Dante, pp. 247–248.
[2] *Convivio, loc. cit.*, p. 251.

of imagination, but because he believed Rome had as much right as Jerusalem to recall the Promised City, true fatherland of true Christians.

Then Christ is doubly Roman if we accept Dante's phrase: Roman in celestial Rome, where He is King; Roman in earthly Rome, where the Head of His Church has fixed his see.

If Jerusalem and Rome are in this sense equal on the mystical plane, with a mysterious equality willed from on high, having been appointed from all eternity to blend their identity for the formation of Catholic unity, why was not the coming of Christ foretold to the latter as to the former ?

We know through our Faith and the confirmation of holy Scripture that the Hebrew people, the people of the Old Law, were the people who had received the Promise. They were forewarned over and over again that the work of Redemption, the central pivot of the world's history, was being prepared and was about to be accomplished. These divine warnings were conveyed in two ways: by Figures and by Prophets.

There is no need to dwell on the Prophets. But I would recall to your mind that the Figures were those men of the Old Testament who, through some aspect of their life or character, prefigured the future Christ, more or less veiled, or luminously. In brief, they were human shadows foretelling the Person who was both

human and divine; they were precursors, sometimes unconsciously, of Him who was to fulfil the repeated promises.

For instance, the innocent Abel, who was killed by his brother, is a figure of Christ; Isaac, who was ready to be sacrificed by his father; Melchisedech, King of Salem, who offered sacrifice of bread and wine; Joseph, who was sold as a slave and forgave his betrayers; Moses, who delivered his people from the thraldom of slavery and transmitted the divine message to the fugitives; King David, who foretold in his Psalms the coming of the Saviour and who is the direct blood ancestor of Christ; Jonas, who remained shut up in the monster for three days, as Christ was three days in the tomb; Jeremias, the Prophet, who was derided and persecuted by his own people and who foretold the new Covenant more explicitly than the others.

Add to these Figures, the Prophecies, which for century after century, from the time of Moses to John the Baptist, described the Messiah before his coming, and it will be agreed that no people was ever so forewarned as the Hebrews. And this was but right: out of all the peoples inhabiting the earth, God had chosen that race, in the person of Abraham, to be His property, and He had succored it and punished it, cherished it and cursed it, like His own possession.

It was actually from this race, so chastised and faithless, that God willed His Son should be born: final and

supreme proof of His mysterious partiality. Just as God had willed to appear in the likeness of a poor working man and a Man of Sorrows, so He willed to be born a Jew; that the fullness of the ransom might be complete and the merit of Faith all the greater, since He issued from one of the poorest and most unfortunate nations in the world, one that could be called a People of Sorrows.

But if Rome was as necessary as Jerusalem in the economy of the divine plan — and indeed after the Coming of Christ, Rome took precedence of Jerusalem — could it be possible that God never willed to warn the Romans, as He had warned the Jews ?

Before the Redemption, Jerusalem held the place of honor. God Himself died and rose again there. But Christ knew, and we have no lack of proof of this in the Gospels, that Jerusalem would deny Him and reject Him.

And as a matter of fact, from the time Peter and Paul landed in Rome down to the present day, the positions are reversed and it is Rome that has the place of honor.

Even when due allowance is made for the fact that the warnings given to the Jews had necessarily to be more insistent and more numerous, in order to vindicate the subsequent annulment and punishment, yet we cannot conceive, if we reflect on the wisdom and justice of the Father, that He gave Rome no forewarning of

the great event. The predictions may have been far more obscure and less frequent, but undoubtedly there was *some* warning.

It means nothing whatever that all such warnings have not yet been recognized: in matters of History, one could say what Hamlet said to his friend:

> There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Up to the present date, History has been the prey of hunch-backed students who think everything can be solved by chronology and documents out of archives; or else it is in the hands of unbelieving fantasy-mongers, who can find nothing in it but the abstract outlines of their own vain inventions.

But if someone equipped with courage and doctrine could resume the tradition of Saint Augustine and of Bossuet, interpreting the history of all nations in the sure light of Revelation, I believe that a marvellous correspondence of facts and figures would be discovered, tending to increase, if it were possible to increase, our certainty of a perpetual divine intervention in the affairs of this world, and generally providing a positive and irrefutable confirmation of our Faith, such as would persuade even those who have no faith.

About seventy years ago, Ernest Renan affirmed that historical research marked the end of religion and especially the end of the Christian religion. As a mat-

ter of fact unbelievers have been challenging us for a long time on the ground of history. We willingly take up the challenge: I have the greatest hope that the Apologetic of the future will receive precious and unexpected support precisely from History, when reconstructed and illumined by Catholic scholarship.

Moved by such thoughts as the above, I meditated on the history of Rome, especially on that period near the coming of the Messiah, and it seemed to me one could affirm that Italy too had been forewarned like Judea — and that Rome had, in the last century before the Christian era, in that tumultuous century which prepared the Empire, both a Figure and a Prophet of Christ.

One hundred years before that birth in Bethlehem, a man was born in Italy destined to become one of the most significant and famous actors in the world drama; so famous that his name is celebrated now, after twenty centuries, as it was in his own time and, only a few days ago in Rome, he was solemnly honored on the very place of his death. This man, who seems more than human in the eyes of posterity and who, by a marvellous combination of events and victories, was one of the greatest rulers in the whole world, was called Julius Cæsar.

I can imagine your astonishment at hearing this name. As a matter of fact, Julius Cæsar at first sight

seems to be, and partly is, the very antithesis of Christ. Cæsar sought the kingdom of this world and Christ that of the other world; Cæsar brought war and Christ peace; Cæsar was stained with sin and vice like so many men of his age, whereas Christ is perfection itself. But if we look at the person of Cæsar more closely, ignoring those commonplaces of history manuals, we discover, contrary to what we expected, certain resemblances which first surprise us and in the end convince us.

Before proceeding, it is well to bear this in mind very carefully: *that Figures, according to Catholic doctrine, are nothing but faint and imperfect foreshadowings of the God Man; they are by no means heroically similar to such a point that one can make Plutarchian parallels.*

Man is not commensurable with God, even if God did deign once to take upon Himself the nature of Man.

Further, it is useful to remember that among the Figures of Christ, recognized in the Old Testament by apologists, there are a number who were anything but good and morally perfect: take for instance David and Solomon, who were guilty of grave sins in the eyes of God and man.

Julius Cæsar too was a man and sinful, but if we scrutinize his life and compare his way of thinking and acting with that of his contemporaries and suc-

cessors, we are forced to admit that he was different from them all, strangely *unique* in his own nation, and superior to others, not only in his lofty genius, but more especially in other qualities less spectacular yet just as positive.

First of all, in an age of fierce factions, civil war, and bloody revenges, *Julius Cæsar was a man of pardon.*

All historians who have written about him comment with ingenuous astonishment on this characteristic of his.

We seem to know Cæsar only as the warrior, the conqueror, and nearly everyone thinks of him as Petrarch saw him:

> *Cesare taccio che per ogni piaggia*
> *fece l'erbe sanguigne*
> *di lor vene ove il nostro ferro mise.*
>
> [Of Cæsar I speak not, who made the grass on every shore red with blood where our sword had been thrust.]

But if we read the ancient historians on the other hand, both those who were friendly and those who were antagonistic, such as Sallust, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio Cassius, we find that Cæsar's clemency towards his enemies impressed their imagination even more than his victories.

> Cæsar [writes Velleius Paterculus] returned to Rome when he had conquered his enemies and, *what surpasses human credence,* he forgave all who had taken up arms against him.[1]

[1] Velleius Paterculus, *Historia Romana,* II, 56.

Even the people who had offended him atrociously felt secure of his benevolence.

> He never hated anyone to such an extent [writes Suetonius] that he would not willingly forget it on occasion. Though he replied with equal bitterness to the bitter speeches of Caius Memmius, yet he conceded him his favor shortly afterwards in a request for the Consulship.
>
> He was the first to write to Gaius Calvus, author of defamatory epigrams against him.
>
> Valerius Catullus, whose verses about Mamurra had pierced him to the quick, apologized later to Cæsar and that same day was invited by him to dinner. . .
>
> He would not allow anyone to touch a hair of Cornelius Fagita's head, although when Cæsar was ill and a fugitive, he had barely managed to escape from this man's nocturnal ambushes to deliver him into the hands of Sulla.[1]

After Pharsalia, when he had conquered Pompey's army in Africa and in Spain, and was absolute ruler of the Republic, he pardoned everyone and became reconciled with everyone.

He wrote these words in a celebrated letter from Egypt: "I do not want to imitate Sulla. Let us inaugurate a new mode of conquest and seek for peace in clemency and mildness." [2]

When he saw Pompey's decapitated head, he wept, pursued the slayers and had his rival's statue erected in Rome. When he heard of Cato's suicide, he exclaimed: "O, Cato, I am jealous of your death, because

[1] Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 73–74. [2] Cicero, *Ad Atticum*, ix, 7,

you have jealously deprived me of the glory of saving you." [1] And he ordered the paternal goods to be reserved to the conquered man's sons.[2] He forgave Brutus who had fought against him and who later was to kill him. He forgave Cicero, who had followed the partisans of Pompey: Cicero could not believe in such generosity, which was so unusual and wonderful in the customs of that age that he actually wrote to Atticus: "When he forgives so easily, it means he is deferring vengeance." [3]

As a matter of fact, the Romans used to say it was an extraordinary thing that a conqueror could be content to use a scribe when he could *proscribe*. And Cæsar indeed wrote, according to Plutarch, to the friends of Rome: *"That the greatest and sweetest fruit he had gathered from victory, was to spare the lives of several citizens, who had always borne arms against him."* [4]

And even afterwards, according to Suetonius, "whatever was thought or said against him, he would always rather prevent offence than punish it. For that reason, when he discovered certain plots and nocturnal meetings, he was satisfied to make known by an edict that he was aware of these, and publicly warn those

[1] Plutarch, *Cæsar*, LIV.
[2] Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium, lib.* V, I.
[3] Cicero, *Ad Atticum*, XI, 20.
[4] Plutarch, *Cæsar*, XLVII. Cæsar was clement *pro natura et pro instituto*, says the writer of the *Bell. Afr.*, 88.

who were speaking evil against him to desist."[1]

But in order to understand fully how much this admirable clemency was in contrast with the methods of his age and with the character of the Romans, it is helpful to read the parallel drawn by Sallust (who was anything but pro-Cæsar), between Cæsar and Cato, the man who represented, and still represents to us, the perfect Roman of heroic times:

> Cæsar [wrote Sallust] was held to be great because of his benefits and munificence; Cato, because of his blameless life; the former acquired fame through his mercy and gentleness; the latter grew in majesty through his severity; they both achieved equal glory: one in giving, helping, pardoning; the other by conceding nothing. *Cæsar was the refuge of the afflicted;* Cato, the scourge of kings. Cæsar desired to labor, to keep vigil, to sacrifice himself for his friends and never to deny some assistance.[2]

One could not imagine a more forcible antithesis, and when we know from other sources that Cæsar was truly a "refuge of the afflicted" and that Cato typified the spirit of Roman tradition, we are induced to believe that this mildness, always incredible but particularly so at that time and among that people, has a special and I would almost say a divine significance. Cæsar lived and reigned in the interval between Sulla and Octavius Augustus, and we need only recall the massacres committed by his predecessor and his suc-

[1] Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 75.
[2] Sallust, *Catilina*, LIV. Notice the *miseris perfugium erat.*

cessor to judge the miraculous character of this forgiving man who was later assassinated.

As he was generous in forgiving, so was he generous in giving, even to the humblest. Suetonius says: "Every time there was an abundance of grain, he distributed it without condition or stint . . . and he loaded with the most abundant gifts all citizens who came before him, whether they were invited or came of their own accord. . . Even accused persons, people heavily in debt, and young men who were ruined, obtained from him the most liberal and the most ready assistance." [1] Another historian also says that his liberality was widely extended and excessive.

On one occasion, he invited the whole population of Rome to dine at his expense: twenty-two thousand tables, with three couches to each, more than two hundred thousand people. And as the meal seemed to him rather scanty and not in proportion to his liberality, he had another most sumptuous feast prepared after an interval of five days.[2]

He did not despise humble people, nor even sinners. When he was ruler, he raised men of the humblest position to the first honors of the state, and when he was reproached for doing so, he said openly that if he had used the services of assassins and cut-throats to maintain his dignity, he would have given a similar recompense even to them.[3]

[1] Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 26, 27. [2] *Ibid.*, 38. [3] *Ibid.*, 72.

Yet his sweetness and generosity did not avail to save him from envy and hatred. Once because he had made a speech in the Senate on behalf of certain accused persons in order to save them from death, he was assailed by officers with drawn swords and was only with difficulty rescued by a few friends, who covered him with their togas.

Furthermore, there is an aspect of Cæsar's character to which too little attention has been paid: his relations with divinity. It is hardly ever borne in mind that Cæsar, founder of that Empire which was the inheritance of the Papacy, was a *priest* at the age of seventeen, *Flamen Dialis,* or the highest in rank; and he was elected *Pontifex Maximus* at the age of thirty-seven, head therefore of the Roman religion, residing in the ancient palace of the King.[1]

But more than that: Cæsar believed he was descended from a divine race. In the public discourse which he pronounced for a panegyric of his deceased wife, he said: "My aunt, Julia, descended through her mother from a race of kings, and through her father she was related to the immortals. From Ancus Martius in fact descend the Martian kings from whose race my mother came, and Iulus, founder of my family, was the grandson of Venus. *I have therefore in my*

[1] W. Warde Fowler's essay, *An Unnoticed Trait in the Character of Julius Cæsar* (in "Classical Review," 1916, pp. 68–71), shows what an interest he took in the ceremonies of the Roman and foreign cults. Strange interest for one who was only soldier and statesman.

ancestry the venerable majesty of kings who towered above men for so long, and the sacredness of the Gods upon whom the kings themselves depend." [1] The discourse is haughty and the genealogy fantastic, but could there not be here a pagan prefiguration of the double descent of Christ, who was Son of David according to the flesh and Son of God according to the spirit ?

Cæsar's connection with religion does not end there: after his death, the Senate ordered that he was to be venerated as a God and later they had a temple erected to Clemency and dedicated to him.[2]

Notice that Cæsar was the first Roman, since the mythical Romulus, to be assumed among the Gods. So that when Valerius Maximus has described his death, he adds: "It is not usual for men to die in such a manner, but that is how the immortal Gods usually return to heaven." [3]

Even leaving aside the celestial and earthly prodigies accompanying his death, a strange similarity may be remarked between the fate of those who killed Cæsar and the fate of those who killed Christ. We know what a wretched end had Judas, Pilate, Caiphas, and Herod Antipas; and we know also that, after a few years, the principal conspirators of the Ides of March were either killed or committed suicide: Decimus Brutus and Pontius Aquila died in the war of Modena,

[1] Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 6. [2] Plutarch, *Cæsar*, LXVII.
[3] Valerius Maximus, III, 5.

Marcus Brutus and Cassius killed themselves after the defeat at Philippi, and Dante condemns them to the same punishment as Judas.

But there is a still more singular connection: *Cæsar's extraordinary partiality for the race from whom Christ was to be born, for the Hebrew people.* We learn from Josephus that Cæsar conceded many and repeated privileges to the Jews, such as he did not grant to any other people in the East. Suetonius tells us that actually during the period in which Cæsar suppressed all corporations, except the most ancient ones,[1] he gave the Jews liberty to constitute an independent body anywhere, with its own authority and statutes, and he further allowed them to maintain their own cult, besides granting them exemption from many taxes and from military service, together with the right to live according to the customs of their forefathers.[2]

Cæsar stood out in this peculiarity too, almost by mysterious design, from all other Romans, because in the writings of his compatriots, both before and after his time, we find no references to the Jews that are not sneering and derisive.[3]

Therefore it is not surprising to read in Suetonius that, after his death, "a multitude of foreigners

[1] Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 42.

[2] Flavius Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, XIV, 10, 2–25.

[3] See Juvenal, XIV; Persius, V; Tacitus, *Hist.*, V, 2, *seq.*; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XIII, 8; Horace, *Sat.*, IV, 113; V, 100; IX, 69; Cicero, *De provinciis consularibus*, V.

gathered, nation by nation, around his bier and mourned him, each according to its custom; especially the Jews, who visited his tomb in crowds for several nights in succession." [1]

Finally, there are the facts of his death. *By whom was Cæsar killed?* By Brutus and Cassius: two men whom he had saved from death, loaded with benefits, and counted among his best friends. *Why was Cæsar killed?* Because he was accused, and falsely, of wanting to make himself king. He had several times refused the crown which his friends offered him, but those refusals did not suffice to save him from the twenty-three dagger thrusts, which killed him.

Further, recall that Brutus, his principal betrayer, was very covetous of money, like Judas; so much so that Brutus practised the fine art of usury in the East, and intrigued with the Roman governors to obtain their assistance in exacting the fruits of his extortions.[2]

One could bring forward a great number of other factors but, not to weary you, I refrain from using even one-third of the evidence collected. One might add, for example, that they twice attempted to kill Cæsar: in Sulla's time and in Cataline's, just as they attempted twice to kill Christ, at Bethlehem and at Nazareth. That his life was ransomed twice for money: when he was followed by the Sullans and

[1] Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 84.

[2] Cicero, *Ad Atticum*, VI, 7; G. Boissier, *Cicéron et ses amis*, Paris, Hachette, 1917, 17th ed., pp. 333 *et seq.*

when he was taken by the pirates. That he had to stay on a desert island for forty days, in the midst of the thieves who had arrested him, as Christ was forty days in the desert among the wild animals and later, on the Cross, had the company of thieves. That Cæsar's imperial mission was revealed to him beside a stream, the Rubicon, as Christ had His Messianic destiny confirmed in the waters of the Jordan. One could also recall what happened on that sea voyage when the pilot was terrified by the fury of the storm (like Peter on the lake), and the hero said: "What dost thou fear ? Cæsar leads." He was twice offered the crown and twice refused it: as Christ twice refused the offer of a temporal kingdom, first in the desert and later after the multiplication of the loaves.[1]

There is an infinite gulf between Cæsar the man and Christ who is God; between the man who wore the crown of laurel and the Man whose brows were bound with the Crown of Thorns; between the man who conquered the world and the Man who conquered souls. But it must be admitted too that we have caught a glimpse of a Cæsar very different from the conventional figure of school manuals: by an inexplicable convergence of attributes and events, the real Cæsar was not unworthy to be raised to the dignity of an unconscious herald of Christ.

We have discovered a Cæsar who had very different

[1] Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, 79. *Matthew* iv. 8–9. *John* vi. 15.

aspirations and virtues from those of other Romans: a Cæsar who forgave his enemies, who was a generous donor to all, who was the legitimate head of the Roman religion, who believed he had a divine origin and was adored as a God; a Cæsar who loved and protected the people of whom the true God was to be born; a Cæsar who was betrayed by one of his friends and who was killed because he was accused, like Christ, of wanting to make himself King.

Notice carefully: I do not claim that this discovery is necessarily true and I defer to those who are wiser than I am. But if you concede that Rome, on account of her future mission, must surely have been divinely warned like Jerusalem, what other Roman, out of all who lived before the Incarnation, could be considered even a palely prophetic Figure of Christ, except Julius Cæsar ? He founded the Empire, as Christ founded the Church; he left Octavius Augustus as his heir, as Christ had left Peter; Peter who was to be invested later on, in the person of his successor, with the inheritance of Cæsar, in addition to that of Christ.

It is not a question here of making a sacrilegious parallel between a man subject to the errors of the Fall and God who redeemed us from the Fall. It is merely a question of seeing in that man who was assassinated in Rome, a sort of confused presentiment, an obscure foreshadowing, of the Man who was killed in Jerusalem. It seems to me indeed a new proof of

God's justice and bounty, that He granted to the holy city of Rome, in the very person of the founder of the Empire, a prophecy in figure of the imminent coming of One who was to build up on the ruins of that Empire, a spiritual Empire which shall never end.

In the first century before Christ in Rome, not only a figure of the Messiah can be discovered, but a Prophet too. This time I am neither the first nor the only one to perceive it. Just as I believe a Figure of the coming Christ can be traced in the most heroic Roman, many Christians aver that His Prophet can likewise be found in the greatest Roman poet, Virgil.

You must all know the famous *Fourth Eclogue,* which contains a mysterious prophecy of the birth of a *puer,* a divine child, by virtue of whom a new epoch would begin in the world.

"Behold the last age of the Cumæan prediction has come," sang Virgil, "there is renewed a long series of generations, behold the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn recommences, behold a new progeny is sent down from the highest heaven." [1]

The Poet continues to say that from him, from this Child, through His virtue, the renovation of the universe would take place, and he describes the new era in images recalling those of the Hebrew prophets, especially Isaias.

[1] *Eclogues,* IV (the *Pollio*) vv. 4–7.

All Christians from the earliest centuries, except Saint Jerome, believed that the prophecy in the Eclogue referred to Christ. In the *Purgatorio,* Statius related to Virgil himself that that passage converted him to the Christian Faith:

> *. . . Tu prima m'inviasti*
> *verso Parnaso a ber nelle sue grotte*
> *e prima appresso Dio m'illuminasti.*
> *Facesti come quei che va di notte,*
> *che porta il lume dietro e sè non giova,*
> *ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte.*
> *Quando dicesti: "Secol si rinnova;*
> *Torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,*
> *e progenie scende da ciel nova."*
> *Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano.*

["... Thou first didst send me towards Parnassus to drink in its caves, and first didst light me on to God. Thou didst like one who goes by night, and carries the light behind him, and profits not himself, but maketh persons wise that follow him, when thou saidst: 'The world is renewed, justice returns and the first age of man, and a new progeny descends from heaven.' Through thee I was a poet, through thee a Christian. . ."] [1]

Millions of words (the greater part of them useless) have been written around the sixty-three verses of the Fourth Eclogue, but it is not my intention to discuss the fantasies of all the writers who have tried to interpret them in so many different ways. Suffice it to say that whereas the Middle Ages were unanimous in

[1] *Purgatorio,* XXII, 64–73. Professor Okey's translation in Temple Classics Dante.

thinking that Virgil had prophesied the imminent coming of Christ, the majority of modern commentators try to prove that the miraculous child was really the son of Asinius Pollio.[1]

They base their interpretation on this fact in particular, that when this son grew to manhood, it seems he boasted he was really Virgil's *puer*, but this posthumous and weak evidence proves nothing, because we know too that Asinius Gallus was conceited and ambitious to such an extent that he aspired to be Emperor; so he naturally had an interest in making people believe that the prophecy of the Fourth Eclogue referred to him.

But no-one has ever explained how on earth Virgil, who was neither a youth nor in his second childhood when he wrote this Eclogue (he was thirty as a matter of fact), could prophesy such a supernatural transmutation of the universe, through the birth of an obscure consul's son.[2]

It seems wiser to my mind to recall what Plato said of poets who "say many and great things, not knowing what they say," and to hold that Virgil, made worthy through his almost Christian purity and benignity, had received in his ardor some premonition

[1] See especially the studies by J. B. Mayor, W. Warde Fowler and R. S. Conway, collected under the title *Virgil's Messianic Eclogue* (London, John Murray, 1907), and A. Bellessort, *Virgile* (Paris, Perrin, 1920), pp. 62 *et seq.*

[2] A Hebrew, S. Reinach, has had to confess: "Ce poème, entièrement religieux, est la première en date des œuvers chrétiennes" (in his edition of the *Eclogues*, p. 29).

of the mighty event which was to take place forty years afterwards in the Stable of Bethlehem.

All writers who discuss this Fourth Eclogue seem to overlook the fact that Virgil was essentially a religious poet.

After the beautiful and convincing expositions of Fustel de Coulanges, of Boissier, and of Ferrero, there can be no doubt that the Æneid is a sacred, one might almost say a theological poem, rather than an heroic one. Æneas is the priest hero to whom is given by celestial decree the mission to carry the gods of the East to Rome. Virgil's whole masterpiece is a religious epopee, developed through religious themes and sanctions.

> His poetry [says Boissier] seems at times to have a Christian tone; he sometimes expresses sentiments which, while they are not altogether foreign to Paganism, are by no means usual, and there is a color in his poem quite different from that of other works inspired by the religions of antiquity.
>
> His hero has already much that is common to the Christian hero's character: a man so sad, so resigned, so diffident of his strength, so ready to make any sacrifice, so obedient to the will of Heaven.[1]

But there is more and better. In recent years, chiefly through the studies of Alessandro Chiappelli, a discussion has been initiated on the really amazing resemblances between the Æneid and the Acts of the

[1] Boissier, *La religion romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins*, Paris, Hachette, I, 255.

Apostles; between the adventures of Ænas, who brought his gods from the East to found Rome, and the adventures of St Paul, who came from the East with his Crucified God, to found the new Christian Rome. These are not merely vague resemblances of a similar itinerary, but continuous, stupefying parallels, which arrive almost at identity in the details of certain parts.[1]

What can we deduce from those singular parallels ? That St. Luke copied the Æneid ? The idea is absurd: first of all, because St Luke, being an inspired writer, had no need of human models and, secondly, because of a still more cogent reason, that St Luke was the eye-witness of what he related in the Acts, and that St Paul's last journey from Cæsarea to Rome is historically certain, whereas that of Æneas is fantastic and legendary.

We are confronted with a new mystery, even greater than that presented in the Fourth Eclogue. We must exclude, as too unlikely and impossible, any imitation of Virgil on the part of St Luke, so there is nothing left for us to suppose but, as in the former case, an involuntary prophetic inspiration in Virgil's soul, who did not know, when he imagined the journey of the sacred bearer of the gods, that he was describing in

[1] A. Chiappelli, *Virgilio nel Nuovo Testamento* (in "Atene e Roma," Jan.–March, 1919, pp. 1–14). See also by the same writer *Gesu e Roma* (in "Nuova Antologia," 1st November 1928), which however does not concern the above argument.

anticipation the voyage of the Apostle of the Gentiles — of the Apostle, notice, of the Romans, who brought the true God from Palestine to Rome.

Virgil was for many reasons worthy of this most high privilege. Just as Cæsar was an exception among the Romans in his clemency towards his enemies, so Virgil was a still greater exception in his candid beauty of soul. Lest I should be accused of trying to embellish his nature, I shall give you the exact words of an illustrious historian of Latin literature, Giussani, who, so far as I know, is not a believer:

> Virgil was an extremely good man, *optimus*. A great delicacy of sentiment was the distinguishing mark of his character, so that his virtues, always rare, and singular in that age, are not what we usually understand by the words *Romana Virtus*, but rather they remind us of the Nazarene's law of love. He was incapable of doing injury to another and he suffered so little from jealousy that he rejoiced in the successes of others as though they were his own. He was candid and affectionate with his friends and was always ready to serve them. One might say that all were his friends, because his sweetness and goodness were such that no-one but a curmudgeon could help loving him. He was as chaste in his life as in his writings, so much so that they used to call him "the little virgin" in Naples.[1]

Does not that remind you of a saint's panegyric ?

Christianity as a matter of fact, wiser than the most learned, has admitted Virgil, alone out of the ancient Romans, even to the honors of the liturgy. In many

[1] Giussani, *Letteratura Romana*, Milan, Vallardi, s.d., p. 24.

churches in the Middle Ages, they had a custom of representing the Prophets who had foretold the coming of Christ, as gathered around the altar on Christmas Day. A personage dressed as Moses would appear, then Isaias and, lastly, Virgil would be summoned:

Vates, Maro, gentilium
Da Christo testimonium!

Whereupon a youth, richly dressed, would come forward and recite the famous verses of the Messianic Eclogue.[1]

We need not be surprised at this Christian veneration of Virgil. It is related in the *Acta Sanctorum* for instance, that at the time of the Decian persecution, three pagans of southern Italy, Secundianus, Marcellianus, and Verianus, were converted by reading Virgil and offered themselves for martyrdom. Dante also, as we have seen, related the tradition according to which the same thing happened to Statius.

Saint Augustine, the Emperor Constantine, Eusebius, Lactantius, Pope Innocent III, and even Abelard and Marsilius Ficinus all believed that Virgil had truly foretold the coming of the Redeemer. Even at the present day, there is no lack of people who believe it. Minutius Felix, the apologist, and Saint Jerome often quoted verses from Virgil in which they found an admirable consonance with Christian sentiments. It

[1] For this and the other following facts see D. Comparetti, *Virgilio nel Medio Evo*, Florence, Seeber, 1896, 2nd Edition.

is related that Saint Donatus, Bishop of Fiesole in the ninth century, came to a council of his colleagues just before his death and recited his profession of faith in the very words of the Virgilian Eclogue, after which he expired.

Proofs can still be found in our churches of this Christian gratitude to the Prophet of the Gentiles. In the stalls of the Cathedral of Zamora, in Spain, Virgil appears among the prophets of the Old Testament; he appears too in Vasari's frescoes in a church in Rimini, and Virgil's famous verse *"jam nova progenies"* was inscribed by Raphael on a picture which can be seen in Rome in Santa Maria della Pace.

Therefore in confirmation of the opinion that Virgil was truly the prophet destined to foretell Christ to the Romans, we have proof from his own works, from the most ancient tradition of the Christian world and, finally, the great argument of his purity of soul, to which little more than Baptism was needed to make him worthy of Paradise.

You all know how Virgil died. When Octavius was returning from the East, he found him ill in Greece and he brought the poet back with him to Rome. When they arrived there, the illness was aggravated and the divine poet died only nineteen years before the birth of Christ.

Before he died, he begged his friends several times to throw his chief writing into the fire, the work that

had cost him so many years of toil, the Æneid. Professors of grammar think he wanted to have it destroyed because it still seemed to him too imperfect. There may be some truth in that. Few understand the tragic sadness of poets who are always doomed, no matter how great they are, to know how petty, feeble and defective their work is, even when it is most acclaimed.

But perhaps in Virgil's virginal soul, made still more prophetic by the approach of death, another divine presentiment arose and grew, a foreknowledge that was both sorrowful and joyful, to wit, that the reign of the gods brought by Æneas at the cost of such labor was drawing to an end; that the miraculous *puer* whom Virgil himself had prophesied was about to be born and that he, the poet, would neither see nor hear Him; and, lastly, that eternal salvation, unless that of the body, was definitely not to be his. He had the sorrowful fortune to be born almost a Christian too long before Christ; the happy misfortune to have seen as in a vision the arrival of the Redeemer of the world; and to have been able to describe with mysterious lucidity, even before it came to pass, the voyage of that Saint Paul who arrived in Rome too late to tell him as a clear certainty all that the prophet poet had glimpsed as an enigma.

Perhaps in his sadness the dying man had a presentiment that a very different poem would be written

within a few decades: a divine poem in four parts, which would surpass and overwhelm the more limited and more polished works of this world in its naked, poor, supernatural simplicity. And then why keep the Æneid ?

And the gentle sufferer, racked with fever on a bed of pain, pressed his friends to hand him the box in which he kept the only copy of his poem, so as to throw it into the fire. But his friends did not obey him and Virgil's sacred book was published after his death.

A few decades afterwards, Christ appeared in a vision to St Paul and said to him: "Be of good heart: as thou hast given testimony of me in Jerusalem, so now it is needful thou shouldst give it in Rome also." Thereupon the Apostle set out for Rome, with the Gospel of Christ Crucified and Risen Again.

A very ancient tradition, preserved in a hymn which formed part of the Mass of St Paul which was sung at Mantua until the end of the fifteenth century, relates that when St Paul visited Virgil's tomb at Naples, he wept passionately, exclaiming: "Oh, supreme poet, what would I not have made of thee, had I found thee in life !"

That may be only a legend, but this is not legendary, but absolute and obvious truth, that St Paul felt himself impelled on several occasions to go to Rome and that it is only in the Epistle to the Romans he wrote

a complete exposition of his doctrine, using more solemn formulæ than in the other Apostolic letters.

> When therefore I shall have accomplished this [the Saint wrote to the Romans] and consigned to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I know, that when I come to you, I shall come in the abundance of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.[1]

These were not idle words of the Apostle. "The fullness of the blessings of Christ" descended indeed on the Empire founded by Cæsar and sung by Virgil, on that Rome called eternal by the poets of antiquity, not knowing what they said, and which did indeed become eternal through the will of the Eternal, who raised up in Rome the chief house of His children.

Of this mystic Rome, for which was shed the generous blood of Cæsar and which was extolled in divine verses by the greatest of our poets, Virgil the Mantuan, and Dante the Florentine, Christ, through the labors of Peter and Paul, is for all time the divine citizen, and each of us now can apply to himself the great promise of Beatrice:

Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano
e sarai meco, sanza fine, cive
di quella Roma onde Cristo è Romano.

[1] *Romans* xv. 28–29.

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